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BRASS

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

SALT, OR THE EDUCATION OF GRIFFITH ADAMS

"Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted?"

—MATTHEW V:13.

E. P. DUTTON & COMPANY

BRASS

A NOVEL OF MARRIAGE

BY

CHARLES G. NORRIS

AUTHOR OF "THE AMATEUR," "SALT, OR THE EDUCATION OF GRIFFITH ADAMS"

Annul a marriage? 'Tis impossible!
Though ring about your neck be brass not gold,
Needs must it clasp, gangrene you all the same!
—*Robert Browning.*

NEW YORK
E. P. DUTTON & COMPANY
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BRANCH ISSUE

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DEDICATED TO MY FRIEND

John Macrae

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BOOK I

BRASS

BOOK I

CHAPTER I

§ 1.

THE hot summer sun beat down mercilessly upon the little town f Vacaville. It was late June heat, when the ranchers raced with ie steadily ripening fruit, and the days became an hour-to-hour truggle against the fast maturing burden of trees and vines. The eat lay quivering over the flat floor of the valley and upon the ides of the distant, hazy hills. It was dry heat and the air was iick with dust. Dust lay ankle-deep in the roads and in layers pon unpainted fences and brown wayside grasses; the tops and verhanging branches of bordering orchards were coated gray-hite with it. One was conscious of the compelling power of the in which drove the fruit relentlessly to its destined maturity. The tmosphere was charged with the sense of ripening things. Under-eath protecting, limp foliage, the implacable heat made its way ith soft, persuasive caresses. The fruit hung fat and heavy; the ranches of trees sagged daily lower and lower; the pickers in the rchards worked with dogged persistency. From one end of Pleas-nt Valley to the other a mighty effort was in progress to harvest ie crop.

Vacaville lies less than eighty miles northeast of San Francisco, busy, hustling town, intent upon its chief and only interest: the urturing and gleaning of its fruit. A handful of streets and houses, stands isolated in a boundless ocean of green tree-tops. The nerald sea spreads itself unbrokenly across the flat level valley and ashes high up toward the crest of the hill barrier which forms the m of the basin. It is here that the vineyards lie like thin foam, the

outer rip of the billowy tide, and through the leafy greenness thread fine wavering lines of white road, concentrating near the centre at the little island of roofs and pavements which constitute the town.

In the late nineties, the most popular spot in Vacaville of a late morning was Ray Bennett's Café. The first hauls of fruit came in from the nearest of surrounding ranches between nine and ten o'clock, and at the end of an hour the lumbering wagons had unloaded their toppling piles of clean, new-made boxes down by the railroad sheds of the shipping company, and the drivers congregated at Bennett's bar for beer or a pony of whiskey before the return trip. Many ranch owners and superintendents dropped in here after the visit to the bank or post-office which had brought them into town, and there was a general meeting of friends and acquaintances. Outside, the street was all but blocked with waiting vehicles. It was before the day of the automobile, and the collection of conveyances was mixed and varied. There were iron-ribbed, heavy-axled trucks of the Donohue ranch; canvas-topped caravans from the Mackinnon orchards; varnished, green-painted, high-walled drays from the Coachman estate, with the golden Coachman emblem stencilled upon their sides; gaudy, decorated vans from the *haciendas* of Anthony Ferreira and his brother; and rickety, creaking, ramshackle affairs maintained by Japs. Scattered among these were smaller vehicles,—buggies and buckboards,—which had brought the ranch-owners and their superintendents to town. Conspicuous among these was the cream-colored, tassel-topped surrey which was always associated in the minds of the people of Vacaville with the gigantic proportions of Judge Baldwin.

§ 2.

The Judge generally might be found about eleven in the morning before the bar of Ray Bennett's Café, condemning in an uninterrupted flow of rich invective his listener or group of listeners,—and it was generally the latter,—for their disinclination to agree with him. Vacaville enjoyed the Judge. He was by far the most erudite person it knew; he was the town's public speaker, and the authority most often quoted, not because of his townsmen's faith in his opinions, but because the Judge never failed to express himself

vith vehement positiveness on any and all subjects. There was no nore picturesque figure in Vacaville, or in all California for that natter, than Judge Samuel Baldwin. A giant of a man with a readth of chest and shoulders which effectively concealed his cumersome girth, he still retained at sixty much of the personal charm nd physical beauty he had enjoyed as a younger man. He had a eavy, massive nose, a kindling, expressive blue eye which had played nuch mischief with feminine hearts, a high forehead and shaggy nick eyebrows. He wore his hair long and straight back off his orehead; it was fine hair, abundant and wavy, reaching to the collar f his coat. It and his thick beard were frankly dyed a dark maogany brown; a little of the dye-stuff was frequently smeared pon the inside of the white linen collar which fitted his neck osely. He never wore a tie, but the stiff, white-bosomed shirt in hich he always appeared even in the hottest weather, was invaiably immaculate. Occasionally when he turned his leonine head ne caught a glimpse beneath his curling dark beard of the diamondudded gold button with which his collar was fastened.

The bottoms of his trousers were thrust inside top-boots which agged in heavy, dusty creases about his ankles. The trousers themelves were cut after the fashion of an earlier day with deep pockets eated over the abdomen. His vest was invariably unbuttoned, xposing the stiff shirt bosom from the bottom of which hung a nall linen tab, pierced with a button-hole. He was rarely seen ith a coat and on this particular morning his great form was raped in a thin voluminous gray duster. His hat was a wide, urling brimmed straw which flopped rhythmically when he walked. n the black band about the crown were tucked various little articles: pencil stub, folded paper memorandums, a stick of sulphur atches, and a tiny red leather container for postage stamps.

The Judge to-day was in fine form and well-launched. The rowd in Bennett's Café listened attentively, for the speaker usually fforded amusement and on this occasion he was holding forth upon subject that interested them. The stentorian voice reached as far the street, and the swing doors of the saloon had been pushed pen and a half-dozen passers-by had crowded into the entrance ay. Other conversation ceased, and directions to Felipe, the halfreed bartender, were given in whispers. The flow of grandiloquence

was interrupted now and again by the clink of glasses, the crunch of shaved ice, and the ring of the cash drawer.

"And this noisome fungus," declaimed the Judge, "is spreading like a malignant growth about your homes, threatening your livelihood, fastening itself ineffaceably upon this defenceless and credulous community."

He paused and set his tall glass down upon the bar behind him. He glanced from face to face of the group about him from under his heavy brows, observed the attention and raucously cleared his throat.

"God bless my soul, gentlemen, we shall annually face this problem of labor. At this time of year we require several thousand extra pairs of hands. The fruit hangs ready to be picked; additional help must be had. Where are we to look for it? Whence is it to come? The immigration of the Chinese is controlled by law and by the regulations of the Six Companies. . . . Poles, Italians, and Portuguese we have, but there is no great supply of any of these nationalities available to help us during these crowded weeks of summer. . . . But—God bless my soul!—there are always *Japs* to be had! No one amongst us knows whence they come but—mark you!—twinkling, goggle-eyed Marushita Ito in his brick-faced edifice, can always obligingly supply them!"

The voice rolled on, gathering resonance and oratorical grandiloquence as the speaker warmed to his subject.

"Look about you, citizens of Vacaville! Observe the insidious results of nurturing within the boundaries of your fertile lands this cankerous parasite which thrives upon your blood and vitals! Half this fair town is under the dominion of an alien race. . . . Do they patronize other commercial industry outside their own? Ito's brick bank across the street is the single evidence of civic interest one of them has shown, and God bless my soul, gentlemen, I see nothing but arrogance and insolence in those flamboyant golden Japanese hieroglyphics which cover the front of that building."

Someone in the back of the crowd cried: "You're dead right, Judge!" The speaker waved his hand, deprecating the interruption, and brought it down heavily on the mahogany surface of the bar.

"Before God, gentlemen, I call upon you to exterminate this

pest, tear out this canker, cleanse Vacaville of this putrefying ulcer which is contaminating our community!"

He paused upon the last word, holding the final gesture, hands and voice upraised, bringing his eloquence dramatically to a close. The crowd moved, a murmur of voices broke out, one or two clapped, a few laughed. Those nearest the Judge edged closer.

"It's perfectly true, Judge," said one, "but you can't run 'em out of town, you know."

"Can't run them out of town?" repeated Judge Baldwin. "Did you ever hear of St. Bartholomew's Eve,—Jasper Sprague?"

"Can't say I have, Judge."

He was dismissed with a gesture and the Judge lifted his glass.

"What do you think we'd better do?" asked a thin, blue-eyed man at his elbow.

"I'll tell you what *I'd* do, Joe Church," said the Judge solemnly. "I'd let my fruit drop to the ground and rot there before I'd let one of those lying, yellow-skinned mongrels set foot upon my land!"

§ 3.

There was a general exodus of the crowd toward the street. Drivers ran to unhitch quickly in an effort to be among the first in the long line of wagons which would presently wind its dusty way down the long wavering road.

As he was leaving the door of the Café, the Judge met his eldest son. Philip Baldwin was just past twenty-two. He was big-framed like his father, large featured and loosely built. Perhaps the most distinctive thing about him was the peculiar looseness with which his joints were knit. His gait was almost an amble. Physically he was singularly strong, with thick trunks for legs and great biceps, hard as a blacksmith's. During the one year he had spent at the University of California in Berkeley, he had been almost at once selected for the 'Varsity football team and although weighing close to two hundred pounds, he had filled the position of tackle because of his fleetness of foot. His lustiness was not apparent to the eye, for he was inclined to slouch, and his face was round and good-natured. His features were still boyish. His teeth were big,

square and white, and when he smiled he showed them frankly; his laugh, displaying the great cavern of his mouth with its glistening rows of molars, was startling. He had the heavy nose and kindling blue eyes of the Judge, but his skin was smooth, taut, shiny and copper-brown like an Indian's. His big physique, his open countenance, made him attractive; men invariably liked him and the girls of the village whispered about him, staring after him from behind the lace curtains of their front windows. As yet he knew little of women; he was shy, easily embarrassed and blushed readily.

Upon encountering his son, the Judge drew back with affected astonishment and surveyed him head to foot.

"God bless my soul! . . . What's up, Phil?"

The boy, accustomed to his father's mannerisms, answered casually.

"Just came in to send some sulphur out by Villa. Has he started back yet? I thought he might be in here."

"Team's just down the street a bit, Phil," interpolated Joe Church at the Judge's side. "Comin' over to-night?"

"Sure, I guess so. . . . I'll be back in a minute, Pa."

There was a hint of embarrassment in his manner as the young man turned away.

Church and the Judge stood in the doorway of the saloon and each followed him with a thought which the half-hidden moment of embarrassment had suggested.

"Fine young feller," went Joe Church's mind. "He'll make a good husband for Rosemary. . . . They're cut out for one another."

"Ulysses and the sirens," ran the Judge's thought. "God help him when he hears their song!"

Philip was back presently, shouting a greeting and waving his big hand to friends on wagon seats as the caravan of trucks filed slowly up the street.

"Ma told me to remind you to see Dermot Phelan about that fire policy, Pa, and I have to get some paraffin at the drug store. Got room for a package in the back of the surrey?"

"How'd you come out?"

"Biked," was the brief answer.

"Put your wheel in the back seat and I'll drive you out."

The Judge turned and walked heavily in the direction of the

nsurance office, his wide-brimmed straw hat flopping with each tep. Philip crossed the street towards the drug store. There had een no expression of thanks on his part for the offer of the lift ome, yet Philip appreciated it, and his father knew it. Judge Baldwin was an arbitrary man where his family was concerned; e did not believe in spoiling his children. Philip was his son, but e was also the ranch superintendent, and as such must not take it or granted that he could ride in the same vehicle as his employer.

Ten minutes later they were jogging comfortably over the long usty road which for six miles wound its way across the valley to he whitewashed gates of the Tucker Ranch.

§ 4.

Judge Baldwin was a "forty-niner," or so he liked people to elieve. As a matter of fact he had come to California in '52 when e was but twenty years old. He was a South Carolinian, his ather the proprietor of a young ladies' seminary in Charleston. Young Samuel had been destined for the bar but an affair with one f his father's most lovely charges had precipitated his departure rom home. The gold fever at that time had had its lure for all oung men, and he had undertaken the three months' voyage around he Horn. His experiences in the early days of California had een fervid and diverse. He had prospected, gambled, and galli-anted. He had made money over night and lost it in the morning. His was an improvident, impractical nature; he was forever buy-ng mining shares too late or selling them too early. Money had ever mattered to him except in so far as it provided him with cash o squander upon his favorite of the moment. Women played a arge part in his life but there were not many of a desirable sort n California at that early day; and among these, there were more n love with him than he with them. Numerous tales concerning lienated affections and broken hearts were wrongfully laid at his oor. His charm, his physical beauty, his Southern gallantry were esponsible for many of these, but in all affairs of the heart he layed the part of a gentleman—as in those days it was conceived o be. He had a fine sense of chivalry.

At the outbreak of the Civil War he had enlisted in a volunteer

regiment recruited in defense of the cause of slavery, only to be forced to remain at home by a malignant attack of typhoid fever, which nearly finished him. His sympathies were always with the South, and after the war was over he might have been admitted to the California bar and practised brilliantly, had it not been for the fact that he refused to take the necessary oath of allegiance to the United States. He spoke Spanish fluently and was regarded by the legal profession throughout the state as an authority on old Spanish land grants and the validity of property titles. He was well known in San Francisco and Sacramento, and generally accorded the title of "Judge." In 1870, he married Miss Matilda Tucker of Winters, and through the death of his wife's uncle, a few years later, came into possession of the fertile lands of the Tucker Ranch at Vacaville.

Judge Baldwin was not cut out for an agriculturist, but his wife was of a different nature. Matilda Tucker had been born on a Massachusetts farm and had crossed the plains in a prairie schooner when she was but seven years old. Her father and uncle had seen more possibilities in the fertility of the land than in delving beneath its surface in search of hidden treasures. Philip Tucker, Matilda's father, had attempted to apply his New England ideas of farming to the new land and had failed. His brother, Fred, however, had felt something different in the golden atmosphere, and had seen opportunities in the sun-kissed sides of Pleasant Valley. Matilda had known a cheerless childhood of struggle and privation from which she was unexpectedly delivered by the death of both parents. There had followed some happy years with her uncle in the first days of his fruit venture and a winter in Sacramento where she had caught the blue kindling glance of the handsomest man she had ever seen. Her early hardships had not robbed her of a girlish prettiness of which she was charmingly unaware. The courtship had been delightful, for she had been flattered beyond all reason by the attentions of Judge Sam Baldwin, whose name, it seemed to her, was on everyone's lips and with whom most of the women she knew were—or pretended to be—in love. She was barely seventeen when she married, and before she was twenty she had borne her husband two children, both boys. There was scarcely ten months' difference in their ages and with the birth of the second, the mother's comeli

ss and girlishness fled, never to return. If disillusionment came, came without too much bitterness. She had learned to know her sband's generosity and unfailing courtesy, his frequent tender nsideration, his cultured and brilliant mind, and she loved him for ese qualities even though she had discovered at the same time his nity, his blustering egotism, his inability to make or save money, d—his unfaithfulness. Her years in Sacramento became a re-wal of the trials of her early youth but she did not complain, nor nk of doing so. Memories of the happy care-free days she had joyed on her uncle's ranch came frequently to her, sustaining her hours of despair, with the knowledge that there awaited her a fuge to which she might turn if her worst fears were realized. t they never were, and when the news came of her Uncle Fred's ath, and she learned that his two hundred and forty acres of ung trees with their rich promise were hers, she could not but ieve that this was at last a divine recognition of her patient adfastness.

Her two sons, Philip and Harry, were respectively ten and nine ars of age when she and the Judge came to Vacaville as pro-etors of the Tucker Ranch, and as if Heaven wished to manifest other blessing, a third child, a girl, was born during the first ar. Lucy was an exquisite baby with the dreamy dark eyes of mother, and fine glass-spun hair of splendid yellow, and Ma-da Baldwin felt that her cup of joy was indeed overflowing.

A conviction grew upon her, then, that she had at last not only ne into the heritage of the land beneath her feet, but of a right-us happiness, to which she believed she was likewise entitled. She e from her bed of travail, her New England spirit mounting ong within her, a splendid determination vitalizing her. She olved that all her uncle's plans and hopes for the lands he had carefully cleared and planted should be realized, that she would ke her easy-going, fantastic husband a figure of forceful influence the community, and that her little family should grow up with background of a simple, Christian home, wherein affection and orum prevailed, and should take a part in the village life in ac-dance with an inheritance of homely, honorable respectability. e told herself she wanted her home and her family to be "Amer-n." She did not use the word with any particular, patriotic sig-

nificance. "American" to her meant honest living, honest work honest pleasure. It implied a living made from the soil, and ever in a Biblical manner, "by the sweat of the brow." She was ever saying to her children:

"You shouldn't do things like that, boys; that's not American . . . Lucy, that's neither ladylike nor American. . . . Thank God this is an American home without any heathen ideas."

She worked hard for her ideals and she succeeded in attaining them. Her elder son, Philip, could hardly remember what his mother had been like before the family had moved to Vacaville. He had a vague recollection of second-rate hotels, cheap boarding houses and dismal attempts at housekeeping in Sacramento. There had been spasmodic intervals at public schools, long periods of daily swims in the muddy river, adventures with leaky rowboats, and first fights with a gang of hoodlums that pestered his brother and himself. His mother moved through those days, a shadowy, uncomplaining figure who sometimes sighed and looked at him with sad, round staring eyes, but who sometimes waked from her lethargy, made both boys resume their weekly baths, clad them in clean clothes and sent them off to school.

But the woman he learned to know in Vacaville was of a different calibre. She rose in the morning before "sun-up," busied herself with pans of cream and rising bread, conferred with Wong regarding the meals for the day, visited the cook-house and inspected its kitchen before either of her sons was down to breakfast. While Philip was still at the table, she would have finished her part of the meal and be out on the side-porch discussing the programme of the day with the foreman. All day long she was occupied with the affairs of the ranch. She stumbled over broken clods in the orchards, studying the green, hard, egg-shaped fruit, deciding when the trees would be ready for the first go-over. She watched the cherries, the 'cots and the plums; she visited the apiary, the barn, the chicken-yard and hog-pens; she inspected the pump-house, the water-tank, the smoke-house and cutting-sheds; she knew her ranch as the good housekeeper knows her cupboards and her icebox. She was silent, observant, indefatigable. As she became older, the habit of silence grew upon her. When there was more than one other person present, she never joined in the conversation, and when she

oke at all, did so from necessity. Youth had hardened her; old e made her flint-like; she never enjoyed the complacent years of ddle-age. At forty she was gray-haired, thin and bony. If she d ever, in those first young days in Sacramento, indulged in fem- ne devices in aid of feminine charms, she despised such artifices w. She brushed her hair straight back from forehead and tem- es and wound the spare locks into a tight knob at the back of her ad; from morning until night she wore a thin, polka-dotted gray rcale which showed the top of her high corsets across her shoulder- ades in an ugly line. Her family never saw her in any other le of garment. The gray dresses were always freshly laundered d on Sundays she pinned white ruffles around neck and wrists. r shoes were scalloped about the button holes and low-heeled. Yet Mrs. Baldwin was not unattractive. There was a light of derstanding in her eyes, a reflection of keen perception in her e. Frequently her immobile features betrayed the hint of an preciative smile. It was no more than a tightening of the corners the mouth, a compression of the thin lips, a twinkle in her gray , yet it had sweetness and comprehension. Her husband, her ldren, her servants, her ranch hands, even the Chinese pickers ognized that she saw into their hearts and rightly read their nds. She knew human nature and her touch was infallible. She s a good woman, conscientious in her duties, sympathetic and ritable. Sick Chinamen in the bunk-house frequently received its from her and gratefully accepted the hot food she carried m. Both Philip and Harry had tramped weary miles with vily laden baskets to poorer ranches when a new baby had been n. Mrs. Baldwin's goodness was reflected in her face but only se who knew her intimately saw it there. Strangers regarded as a hard, cold, shrewd, calculating woman. People in Vacaville w little about her. She drove to church on Sundays with her ee children and occasionally she was seen in town entering or ving the bank with rapid step. Acquaintances hesitated to ad- ss her for she did not encourage advances. Her affable, lo- cious husband was far more approachable.

§ 5.

The Tucker Ranch lay in the heart of Pleasant Valley, and in the hottest part, the Baldwin children often thought. Fred Tucker had been in no hurry to make his acres pay and he had planned well and built slowly. Long before the high gate posts which marked the ranch's entrance were reached, the public road met the even orderly rows of heavily-laden trees which were part of the Tucker orchards. For half-a-mile the trees stretched away on either side, the leafy-topped tunnels between the trunks radiating endlessly from each changing point-of-view, like diverging spokes from a hub. At the entrance the heavy gates swung open automatically, released by the wheel of an approaching vehicle pressing down an iron hinge above the surface of the ground.

The road swept up between the young trees of prune and plum orchards on one side, and on the other a thin line of walnuts which had been set out only three years before as an experiment, and which provided a scanty shade for the gaping doorways of the cutting and packing sheds facing the road upon the right. Noise and color vibrated violently around these low pavilions. The bright pea-green foliage of the walnuts stood out sharply against the red walls of the buildings and ugly, corrugated iron roofs; while in still more vivid contrast rose the hill behind the sheds whose broad side was covered by brilliant orange-hued trays of drying apricots. Upon this discordant riot of tone, the hot sun poured down a harsh flood of glaring light. A din of small noises, turbulent and strident, eddied about these buildings from "sun-up" until dark. The constant banging of boxes, the laughter and cries of the cutters, the shrill cacophony of women vying with the rough bass of men, the metallic clang of hammered nails, the tramp of feet, the jingle of harness and the squeak of axles, contributed deafeningly to the general clamor.

The road divided before it reached this heart of the ranch's activity. Between the forks lay Mrs. Baldwin's prim formal garden with its rows of geraniums, marguerites and zinnias, and little borders of marigolds and verbena. Further on it branched again into the pebble drive that circled up to the house itself. It was

comfortable home with a peaked roof and a shady side-porch. When it had been built there had not been much latitude in available material or in architectural ideas. It needed constant patching, and every spring when the roof presented its seasonal leak, the Judge swore he would no longer "be domiciled in a habitation of such confounded imperfections." But Mrs. Baldwn had done much to its plain exterior to make it attractive. There were narrow beds of rose-bushes, and great colorful masses of fuchsias tacked to the sides of the house with strips of old gloves or the soft leather of discarded shoes. The flower beds were edged with jagged brick ends, and on either side the narrow doorway, on slender lattices, hung tangled clusters of sweet-smelling honeysuckle. A short distance from the house, and towering far above its roof, rose the great fig tree by which the ranch could be identified from any point in the valley. The flat limp leaves of its topmost branches stirred in the breeze seventy-five feet above the ground. The magnificent limbs reared themselves skyward from the massive trunk in splendid stateliness. Under their spacious compass the earth was packed hard; no sunlight filtered through the green canopy and even on hottest days it was always cool beneath the great leafy arch. There was a circular seat built around the tree's trunk, and where one of the leviathan limbs swept near the ground, Lucy had swung a hammock.

Behind the house was the vegetable garden where Fennykiki, the young Chinese boy, who had been born on the ranch, spent his days. Near the kitchen door was the stone-curbed well and the pump house, and beyond that the high-wired, white-washed chicken yard, where a hundred white leghorns cackled and laid their eggs, and where Harry kept his Belgian hares. Further up the road lay the main ranch buildings: the superintendent's two-storied cottage, the bunk-house and cook-house, the barns, stables and blacksmith's shop, while across the irrigating ditch was the picturesque group of huts where the Chinese mysteriously, silently and odorously lived.

§ 6.

Mrs. Baldwin was standing in front of the house, peering into the great reaches of the tree above her, where a barefooted China-

man was gathering figs, when the crunch of the surrey's wheels, with the Judge and her elder son in the front seat, sounded on the drive. About her were half-a-dozen peach baskets half filled with the fruit, black, ripe, and delicately tender, each fig wrapped in one of its own moist leaves. It was impossible to market the lavish bounty of the tree, as the fruit would not ripen if picked green and was too soft for shipment. In a few days, it would begin to drop, and every morning and afternoon the mangled lusciousness would have to be gathered off the ground to keep the earth clean under foot. Only what could be consumed on the ranch or preserved was ever saved.

With an impassive study, Mrs. Baldwin regarded her husband and son as they drove up, but she gave them no verbal greeting. The Judge wrapped the reins around the whip-socket and ponderously prepared to descend. Philip busied himself extricating his wheel from the back seat. As he came toward her presently, pushing the bicycle before him, she addressed him.

"Jasper Sprague sent word about the girls; they'll be finished to-day and 'll be over Sunday."

"How many are there?" her son inquired.

"Nine; two're sick and went back to 'Frisco yesterday."

Mrs. Baldwin referred to one of the groups of young women, formed in San Francisco, which came to the fruit districts in summer to help in cutting apricots and peaches for drying. The nucleus of each group was generally a family who made it a practice to visit the ranches every year. They were organized by religious societies or working girls' clubs, and went from ranch to ranch about Vacaville, carrying with them their tents and kitchen equipment. They combined their vacations with employment and had a general good time. The scarcity of labor made the ranchers welcome them at busy seasons. The nimblest-fingered earned a dollar-and-a-quarter to a dollar-and-a-half a day, and in the evenings they laughed, sang and flirted.

"We can put them across the irrigating ditch next to the alfalfa field," Philip said, deliberating. "I tell you, Ma, I won't have 'em down near the sheds as we've always done; when they're not working, they demoralize the men. . . ."

Mrs. Baldwin inclined her head, assenting.

"Take the paraffin into the kitchen; I'm putting some of these up to-morrow," she said, referring to the figs.

Philip rested his wheel against the grilled lattice that supported the honeysuckle vine over the doorway, and was about to enter when there was a quick rush of blue and gold color, flying hair and thin legs, as a little girl ran out of the house and flung herself into his arms.

"What is it? What is it?" she cried. "What'd you bring me, Phil?"

Lucy's big brother laughed, throwing back his head, flashing his great teeth. He caught the little girl up with one hand and lifted her high in the air where she struggled and screamed.

"Put the child down,—put the child down, Phil," cautioned the Judge from the surrey. "We'll have broken bones and the doctor. . . ."

Philip gave Lucy a final toss and caught her deftly about the waist as she came down. She clung to him, laughing and gasping.

Presently, when her breath returned, she renewed her demands.

Her brother caught her to him again and kissed her in the soft curve of her neck.

"Ugh—you need a shavey-shave! Get away. . . . Tell me what it *is*."

He was persuaded finally to satisfy her curiosity, and, with mock mystery, drew from his pocket a little striped paper bag.

"It's hoarhound, I'll bet!" cried the child, reaching for the prize.

"It *is* hoarhound," she exclaimed exultantly, capturing it.

Mrs. Baldwin's gray eyes rested on her big son; her mouth tightened and she shook her head in mild disapproval.

"Phil—you shouldn't. It isn't good for her, you know that,—and you spoil her. There's no managing the child since you came home. . . . Your dinner's ready, Judge," she announced, including her son with a gesture. "Wong's putting it on the table."

Philip passionately loved his little sister. When he returned after the year he had spent in the agricultural college at the University of California, he had come home to discover her. During his absence, her personality had blossomed and he found in her a tender, loving, warm litte body who gave him affection ardent as his own. He was ever fondling her, and found rare delight in

holding her within the circle of his arm when the family sat out on the side porch after supper, until her head dropped against his shoulder and she fell asleep. There was something paternal, something of the lover in his feeling for Lucy, but Philip was unable to analyze his emotions. Unusually simple-minded, his brain worked slowly, and he was deliberate of action both in mind and body.

There were several marked differences between him and his brother Harry, who joined the Judge and himself while they were still busy with mutton stew and boiled potatoes in the dining-room. Harry was fair like his sister, and of shorter stature than Philip. He had none of his brother's clumsiness; he was supple and leaner built. His face, which otherwise might have been considered equally as well-favored as Philip's, was marred by a broken nose, a fracture of his early youth, which had crookedly knit. He did not impress one with the force or reliability Philip suggested, but he had an amiable disposition, an engaging quality only to be described as sweetness. He was extremely popular with the young bloods that hung around the village pool-rooms, or crowded about the bar of Ray Bennett's Café on Saturday nights, where he was jovially greeted and eagerly sought in intimate comradeship. The girls of the village liked him, too; they found his quick sympathetic laugh and his easy chatter more agreeable than his brother's tongue-tied ponderousness. Harry was by far the best dancer in the community. Both the Baldwin boys were good-natured; it was the one quality they shared to a marked degree, but while Philip was good-natured in an easy-going, friendly fashion, Harry was so from a willingness to be obliging and a desire to be liked. It was this partiality for popularity that drew Harry toward Vacaville's bright lights on Saturday nights, and made him a frequent visitor in its pool-rooms. Occasionally he was driven home at an early hour on a Sunday morning, in a befuddled condition due to too much beer. No one,—not even his staid, slow-witted, heavy-going brother,—suspected just how far Harry went, or what happened to him on these Saturday night jaunts into Vacaville.

§ 7.

Philip and his father were finishing their dinner when Harry joined them. He had been in the carpenter shop all morning, knocking boxes together. and he brought with him a fine aroma of fresh sawdust and clean new pine. He swung a chair between his legs and sat down, leaning his elbows on the table. He had had his dinner with the rest of the family at the noon hour.

"When you goin' to begin on the Hale's Earlies?" he demanded of his brother. "The Alexanders are all in."

Philip, moving his jaws deliberately, finished masticating slowly, before he answered:

"I sent a batch of Chinks over there this morning."

"Ma asked me and I didn't know," Harry explained.

They talked of ranch matters, and affairs in town, and presently the Judge rose with much scraping of chair and clearing of throat. He seemed to enjoy the noise of clearing his throat; he indulged in it frequently, tearing his thorax with terrific rending sounds, prolonging the raucous tones in a series of bass rumbles.

Mrs. Baldwin appeared at the door.

"Joe Church spoke about our coming over to-night," the Judge remarked, addressing her. "He asked for Lucy."

His wife slowly shook her head.

"She gets to bed too late. . . . It isn't for children. . . . Think I'll stay at home, too. . . . You and the boys go."

"I suppose you'll be going, Phil?" the Judge asked, eyeing his son.

"Oh, sure, I guess so." The statement came quickly, and after a moment's pause, he added: "I thought I might."

He rose from the table, kicked back his chair, and wiped his mouth with a quick motion of the back of his hand. He nodded to his brother and they tramped out of the room, their heavy shoes making a clatter on the thinly carpeted floor. The Judge stepped to the window and watched their figures as they strode down the pebble road toward the sheds. A moment's pride in their splendid youth and lustiness came to him, but he did not speak of it. His mind was full of another matter.

"What's between Phil and Rosemary Church?" he asked his wife, who was carefully scraping the unused butter upon her husband's and son's plates back into the butter dish.

Mrs. Baldwin cast him a quick, sharp look.

"How'd you mean?" she asked.

"Well . . ." The Judge pulled his beard thoughtfully. "I was just wondering—that was all."

His wife paused in her small task, and in the silence the old clock in the kitchen could be heard ticking audibly.

"Rosemary's a good girl. When Phil's ready I couldn't want a better wife for him." Her speech was slow, as if she had meditated upon the words a long time.

"He might do worse—might do worse." The Judge paused, clearing his throat. "She's a comely wench and she's . . ." He made vague expressive motions with his hands. "Boys ought to marry young; keeps the rascals out of mischief."

Mrs. Baldwin regarded her husband meditatively.

"Marriage is a grave matter, Samuel; it's the gravest thing in a man's or a woman's life. It makes or mars. There's time enough . . . there's always time enough."

She picked up the butter dish and disappeared in the direction of the pantry.

CHAPTER II.

§ 1.

SATURDAY night was the one night of pleasure in the week the Baldwin boys allowed themselves. All Vacaville celebrated on Saturday night. Its streets were filled with loitering crowds which gathered from even the remotest ranches. Ray Bennett's Café did not close its door until long after midnight and there was much gambling and drinking. Italians and Portuguese commenced to flock into town shortly after sun-down; even Chinatown and the despised section where the Japs congregated held revel until the morning's small hours. However late the merriment was kept up, the merry-makers had to be back at work by "sun-up" the next morning, for Sunday was another long fourteen-hour working day. The fruit ripening hourly allowed no observance of the Sabbath.

Yet Saturday night was always chosen for entertainments, and the Churches had selected it as the day to celebrate their daughter's birthday. They lived four miles across the valley from the Tucker ranch and were old timers—among the oldest in the community. In spite of their long residence, they had had a hard time making a living out of their small acreage, for Joe Church had been cramped for money and was naturally unprogressive. He had finally been persuaded that there was more profit in dried 'cots than in fresh fruit shipped East, and that the hillsides of Pleasant Valley were better suited to grapes than to hops. As a result of his first concession to the sound advice of his friends, he had decided upon the construction of a cutting shed which was now slowly approaching completion. Its unfinished condition suggested only too poignantly to the demure daughter of the household a delightful place for a dance, the only form of polite entertainment known in Vacaville.

For days pretty, eager Rosemary Church had planned for this gala night of hospitality. The shelves and dusty glass showcases

in Blum's General Merchandise store in Vacaville had been tirelessly scanned on every occasion which took her to town, for possible new ideas to brighten the affair. The pages of *Farm and Fireside* and *The Fruit Grower* had been studied nightly and the suggested forms of entertaining read with the anxious hope of discovering something original. In the end she had decided on some yellow Chinese lanterns, and had persuaded her father to purchase three bolts of red, white and blue cheesecloth. With these she had decorated the unfinished pavilion, and while the effect of the gaudy cheesecloth was fortunately dimmed when dusk fell, the light of the yellow lanterns cast a romantic glamor over the scene which delighted her.

There had been much correspondence concerning her costume between her mother and her Aunt Malvena, who lived in Sacramento. The material finally purchased and sent was dotted white Swiss muslin, and the dress itself was copied from a colored Parisian fashion-plate, also supplied by this worldly relative. It was sufficiently simple and becoming, with a broad white satin sash and a white tulle edging about the modest V-shaped neck; what gladdened the girl's young heart above all else were the enormous balloon sleeves, then in vogue, whose effectiveness she daringly increased by stuffing their roomy interiors with tissue paper.

Rosemary had been born in Marysville, not many miles from Vacaville. One Christmas, when she was fourteen years old, she had visited Aunt Malvena in Sacramento, but with that exception she had seen nothing of the world beyond what she found in Vacaville and distantly remembered Marysville. She was innocent, virginal, Arcadian. Her world was compassed by the walls of Pleasant Valley and she knew only what she had learned in her father's home and the public and high schools of Vacaville. If she was unsophisticated in worldly matters, she was far from being unversed in domestic ones. Her mother was of the old-fashioned sort, and Rosemary had spent more time over her needle-work and in the kitchen than over her text-books. As a result, she was an excellent cook and her fancy work had drawn the highest bid in the auction held by the Reverend Clement Gould of Epiphany Church to raise funds for the Sunday school room's new carpet. She had made her own dress for the birthday party, and Mrs. Church, kneeling on the

floor to pin the bottom hem of the skirt to an even length, thought to herself with satisfaction that her daughter was well equipped for the demands of life.

Both she and her husband always thought of Rosemary as some day marrying Philip Baldwin. Rosemary thought so, too, but she would have died of mortification had she imagined her girlish fancies and dreams were ever suspected. Mrs. Church and her husband, lying side by side in their old walnut bed, after the lamp had been blown out, frequently referred to the possibility in whispers.

"That can wait until after Phil and Rosemary are married."

"I'm saving that spread of Ma's for Phil and Rosemary . . . it'll come in handy in the housekeeping."

Rosemary in her own narrow bed, tucked under the shelving ceiling of her little room, would suddenly feel the warm blood pounding in her cheeks and her heart hammering to suffocation when wayward thoughts led her to fancy the touch of Phil's big hand and the protecting circle of his great arm.

The girl had a right to her fancies, though Philip, knowingly, had never justified them. He had never kissed her, nor hinted at love, had never so much as held her hand. They had played together as children, and in high school had been thrown daily in each other's company. At picnics and dances he had sat beside her, and occasionally had taken her to school baseball games or to entertainments by home talent in Walker's Opera House. They thoroughly liked one another, they enjoyed and sought one another's society, they were great friends and unhesitatingly acknowledged it. But that was before Philip had gone to Berkeley. In those months of absence, natures other than little Lucy's had matured and ripened and none more so than her brother's. Philip came home to blush dark crimson when he met Rosemary's eye, to stammer when he tried to speak to her, to find himself all hands and feet, clumsy and awkward, when near her. The old intimacy and companionship were gone; his self-consciousness made a barrier between them. Rosemary did not understand; she blushed and stammered in return. She persuaded herself that it was Love.

§ 2.

The company began to assemble as early as eight o'clock when Jasper Sprague, the superintendent of the Coachman estate, arrived in his carry-all with wife and baby, and his fifteen-year-old lanky son, Jasper Junior. The baby had to be nursed and settled off before the party commenced, Mrs. Sprague explained, or otherwise "he'd raise Ned and there'd be no fun for his Ma." Rosemary, fastening the last hooks of her dress, heard their voices on the veranda and suddenly stopped to place both hands over her heart. She drew a long breath and stared back at her reflection in the mirror, scrutinizing the familiar features. She could not tell whether she was "pretty" or not. She longed with all her hungry heart to be "pretty,"—pretty like Virginia Bradshaw,—Ted Bradshaw's daughter,—who had gone East to school, or like Dulcia Ferreira with her dark flashing eyes and her thick coils of black hair, set off with an enormous Spanish comb. "Beautiful," "handsome," anything superlative, meant nothing to Rosemary. She wanted only to be "pretty"; "kind of pretty" she would whisper to herself, hopefully. Sometimes she thought she was honestly that; a chance reflection of herself in an unconscious moment would give her this delightful assurance. More often she feared the truth to be what she carelessly declared: that she was "perfectly hideous." But she did not believe this any more than she believed she was "pretty." Most of the time, as to-night, she was in doubt.

As a matter of fact, Rosemary Church had a serene beauty of a lovely type. Her face was a delicate oval with heavily pencilled brows arching honest, gentle eyes of soft brown; her nose and mouth were nicely made, the coloring of her skin a lovely warm rose; her chestnut hair, thick and crinkly, she wore twisted into a double braid, secured by an imitation tortoise-shell pin at the nape of her neck. In the language of the day, it was "clubbed." To-night, her warm skin and dark hair contrasted effectively with her sheer white costume, and from the flat satin bow upon her head to her slim ankles, criss-crossed with the ribbon strings of her first high-heeled slippers, she presented as lovely a picture as she herself could have wished.

It was well after nine o'clock when the Baldwins arrived. The

circular driveway in front of the Churches' home was blocked with buggies and wagons, and a number had been driven into the neighboring orchard. The cutting shed was a bright, iridescent spot in the soft darkness. Inside, couples were slowly revolving, while the circle of onlookers, about the wall-less pavilion, were sharply silhouetted against the warm, yellow light of the Chinese lanterns.

The orchestra, composed of three aged negroes, achieved some kind of rhythm out of two battered violins and an accordion,—the only music to be hired in the valley. They sat at some distance from the cutting shed, in the light of stable lanterns, and the waltz they lugubriously produced from their ancient instruments was all but drowned by the thud of feet upon the hollow flooring. The heat was oppressive and the dancers panted from their exertions. There was some lightness and grace among the women, but the men, for the most part, performed the intricate maneuvers heavily, awkwardly, upon flat heels. Not more than twenty couples could comfortably revolve on the limited floor space but that did not prove a difficulty, as there was scarcely a score of men among the guests. For every man or boy there were at least three women, and this feminine preponderance composed the bulk of the double row of spectators, who found contentment in fanning themselves and commenting upon the performers.

"Lord, look at the women!" Harry Baldwin exclaimed to his brother as he climbed out of the surrey. "There's a night's work cut out for us!"

Philip frowned in distaste. He was a poor dancer because of his size and weight and what natural suppleness he had was in bonds, to-night, through the unfamiliar tightness of his best suit. His high collar,—an affectation he had brought back with him from Berkeley,—had already begun to wilt and the palms of his hands were wet with perspiration. He groaned helplessly as he took in the scene, and regretted the folly that had persuaded him to come.

There was a flutter of excitement and a buzz of whispering as the Baldwin boys came up. The Judge had joined his host on the veranda, settling himself to the enjoyment of a cigar and the flow of eloquence which would presently inspire him. Philip and Harry were immediately surrounded, and soon found themselves pushing their way on to the dancing floor, embarrassed, laughing nervously,

a delighted, self-conscious girl clinging to the arm of each. Harry forgot himself almost at once, began to whirl his partner about and in a few minutes was enjoying himself thoroughly. Philip, ponderously rotating, felt his collar wilting into soft folds, the sweat trickling down his neck and forehead, and became uncomfortable and disgusted. He saw Rosemary's warm, flushed face, and returned her friendly nod, unsmilingly.

It was a tremendous relief when the music ceased, and he and his partner could herd with the others to the nearby booth where Mrs. Church was busily ladling out lemonade into goblets of pressed glass.

The evening dragged on miserably. Philip lost what natural confidence he had, and dreaded the necessity for dancing. Thoroughly out of sorts with the gaiety around him, he was becoming silent and sullen, until happily he recalled a phrase he had overheard at a college dance in Berkeley. A knowing senior had proposed to his partner to "sit the dance out." The recollection came as a deliverance. Thereafter, he concocted a string of clumsy phrases which delighted him with their effectiveness.

"I guess I'd be doing these folks a favor if I kept my big hulk outside . . . they ought to make a special dance-hall for me . . . two's company but you and I're a crowd . . . ah-ha . . . let's sit this dance out!—what d'you say? Huh?—Let's sit this out."

There was always an anxious moment while he waited to learn if his meaning had been understood. The suggestion was new to most of the girls, but not one among them was unaware that he had been to Berkeley, and consequently must know what was the correct thing to say and do.

He was consistently successful in avoiding having to dance until he encountered Rosemary. She looked up into his face, frankly disappointed.

"Oh . . . let's *dance!* . . . Don't you want to?"

He floundered at this, and his embarrassment returned; silently he led the way to the pavilion floor. The dance was a schottische and Philip was unfamiliar with its movements. Again he became aware of his size and awkwardness; each time he collided with another couple he groaned helplessly; the faces of the onlookers

showed ghastly yellow in the lantern light; they all seemed to be staring and laughing at him.

"I can't dance this thing, Rosemary," he said abruptly, stopping short. "Let's get out of here . . . let's—let's sit it out!"

"Oh, all right." The girl's readiness now to fall in with his proposal convinced him he had made her as uncomfortable as he was himself. He mopped his face and hands with his already damp handkerchief, and guided her off the floor into the cool of the night.

They walked out of the circle of light and aimlessly wandered toward the huddled vehicles near the veranda. Philip could hear his father's redundant language rising and falling oratorically in an endless flow. They found themselves presently down by the wire fence that bordered the road, and leaned against this, while Philip reached for his tobacco and papers and began to roll himself a cigarette.

"It's a peach of a night," he ventured after the first revivifying inhalation.

"Yes,—it *is* lovely."

"Nice party . . . out of sight!"

"I'm glad you like it. We didn't expect so many people."

"That's right . . . everybody you know's here."

"Y-e-s. We only expected about fifty or so."

"Well, everybody wanted to come to your birthday party."

"I don't know whatever brought them, but it was certainly nice for so many to come."

"Well, that's because you're so popular."

"I'm *not* popular! You know that isn't so."

"You bet it is. . . . It's a peach of a party."

"Well, I'm glad you like it. It's awfully hot, though."

There was a pause. Rosemary remembered she had been told the adjective was not a ladylike word, and she attempted to correct herself.

"I mean it's very warm. Don't you think it is warm?"

"It's warm all right. I was nearly dead in there . . . I guess I've forgotten how to dance."

"Oh, Phil! You dance perfectly lovely."

"Ugh . . . I guess not. I'm as clumsy as a bear."

"Why Philip Baldwin! You're nothing of the sort!"

"I like to sit dances out. I'm too big. They ought to make special dance hall for me. . . . Two's company but you and I ar a crowd."

"Why, Phil, I don't understand you."

"Oh, I'm so ungainly. It's rotten to be so big and clumsy They say three's a crowd but you and I would make a crowd. don't see why people haven't got on to us before."

Both thought this sounded personal, that there was an implica tion in the words, and neither could think of anything else to add

Rosemary was about to say: "People always talk," but thi struck her as being even more significant, and she abruptly checke herself. At the moment, it appeared she had saved herself fron an irreparable admission; the narrowness of her escape, with th sickening consequences of such a slip rushed over her; the bloo surged hotly in her temples and she began to tremble.

Philip saw her quivering lips and fingers and a strange emotio stirred his pulse. It was as if some chord of lovely harmony withi him had suddenly been strummed by a magic hand, thrilling hir delightfully with exquisite vibrations. The girl's nearness, he sweetness and femininenes, her girlish loveliness suddenly swep over him. He was afraid to move, afraid to speak. Unexpectedl their youth reached out, seeking one another with eager fingers their hearts hammered in unison, their senses swam together in strange ecstasy of new delight. It was a long delicious moment.

The fullness of the wonderful sensation passed. They becam conscious once more of their physical limitations, their own identi ties. Philip wet his dry lips and a faint catch in his throat escape him. Slight as the sound was, it broke the spell; the girl starte forward as if to rejoin the others, and then suddenly Philip too her in his arms. He drew her to him roughly, clumsily; he hel her close against his big frame and kissed her awkwardly and fe vently on hair and neck. Rosemary struggled. For an instant som virgin instinct battled strong within her; she struck at his grea chest with small knotted fists; then quickly she surrendered like beaten lily upon his arm. Her dark hair rolled against his shoulde and she lifted her warm mouth to his eager lips.

Philip gazed at the white face in the crook of his elbow and ex

itedly whispered her name. She seemed marvellously beautiful to im. He kissed her again softly, but the touch of his lips a second me roused her. Resolutely she freed herself.

"No—no," she breathed, pushing him from her. "No, Philip—e mustn't. You shouldn't . . ."

Her wild tumult was like a frightened bird's, charming and de-ghtful. He tried to catch her hand again but she evaded him.

Abruptly,—startling them,—there was an interruption: a sound pon the road, the crunch of a heel and a man's voice.

"Rosemary! Hello—Rosemary!"

Philip recognized his brother's tones. He straightened himself nd strove to steady his voice and racing pulse.

"Here we are,—over here," he called back.

Harry's figure came toward them, his eyes peering through the arkness.

"I say,—this is our dance, Rosemary! I've been looking all over or you."

The girl murmured something, but Philip's head was still pinning and he did not hear. She turned away and he watched er white dress beside his brother's dark figure as they hurried up ie road; he followed her with his eyes until she was lost among the her dancers. Then he passed his hands slowly over his face and ressed them against his hot skin. A sense of culpability shut own upon him. It seemed to him he had taken advantage of this weet childish girl who had always trusted him, had crushed down er feeble strength, had kissed her against her will. He had not eant to do so; a moment before he had had no thought of such a ing; in some inexplicable way he had suddenly been impelled to ke her in her arms. The memory of her soft yielding body as it y in the crook of his elbow came freshly back to him.

"My God!" he breathed, in bitter self-reproach. "That's the st girl I ever kissed!"

§ 3.

He awoke next morning before the clangorous bell on top the ok-house stirred the ranch into life. He yawned sleepily, his owsiness numbing his senses, consciousness stealing upon him

with pleasant promise. After a few moments he began rubbing his eyes vigorously, and after he was sufficiently awake, tucked one hard forearm beneath his head, and stared out through the open window at the paling heavens already touched with dawn, deliberately setting his mind to bring back slowly and leisurely the details of the previous evening.

It was yet the gray hour of morning; the birds were already nimbly breakfasting, breaking the stillness of the hour with their staccato piping. In the next room Mrs. Baldwin was moving about, and below Wong was briskly chopping kindling for his morning fire.

He closed his eyes dreamily and lived again the enthralling moments of his encounter with the girl, awaking in himself afresh the intoxicating sensations that had stirred and thrilled him. He stretched himself luxuriously, languorously, his arms extended, his legs flung wide, arching his back like a great cat. Relaxed, a smile of happy contentment came to his lips. Then with a bound, he jerked back the covers and leaped to the floor. He leaned his forehead against the raised sash of the window for a moment, drinking in the sweet fragrance of the morning. At his elbow stood an old dilapidated desk which had been his own for many years. He turned to this now and, after rummaging in one of its lower drawers, extracted a mounted photograph with torn and broken corners. It was a picture of his graduating class at high school. He found Rosemary's face among the others and studied it, rubbing the tiny likeness in the photograph with a fore-finger tip in an effort to make it less indistinct.

Presently he laid it down and drew off his night-shirt with a quick movement of his arms. His nakedness was pleasant. Again he stretched himself, rising on his toes, reaching heavenward with distended fingers. His clean, young body was hard, lean and magnificently proportioned, the flesh like unblemished, white ivory; the lithe muscles beneath the satin skin rippled sinuously like coiling and uncoiling snakes. He felt gloriously alive, gloriously potential. His youth, his great strength, his vigorous health delighted him. He inflated his chest, sucking his stomach into a great cavern beneath his ribs, pounding with shut fists the hard surface of his

breast, alternately digging his finger-tips into the firm flesh about the nipples. When the pent-up breath escaped, it left him with an explosion of a smothered shout.

At breakfast his mother eyed him more than once attentively, and his buoyancy aroused even Harry's curiosity.

"What's the matter with you this morning?" he demanded, sucking in great mouthfuls of griddle cakes. "You act kind of crazy."

"Oh,—just ginger. I used to feel this way before a big game when I'd been training. By George, I'd like to be out on the old gridiron this afternoon. . . . Wish there wasn't always so much darned work!"

But the longing for diversion was short-lived. His energy was almost immediately directed to ranch affairs. Before he had finished his breakfast the packing boss was waiting on the side porch for orders, and Fennykiki brought word that the irrigating pump had broken down.

But the morning was golden; the sky, the air, the earth possessed some new challenge for him that sent the blood pounding in his veins and put a spring into his step. His loose-jointed figure seemed fairly to bound with excess vitality as he strode along the ranch roads or crossed the clodded surface of the orchards. At the blacksmith's shop for sheer joy in his strength, he caught up a horse-shoe and twisted its prongs until it parted in his hands. With the full sweep of his open palm, he struck the flank of one of the mules in the corral, and laughed aloud when the animal kicked out viciously and ran madly from him with wide rolling eyes.

Of Rosemary, he hardly thought at all. If visions of her returned to him, they were of her white oval face and masses of dark, chestnut hair lying in the crook of his elbow, her lips waiting for his kiss. More than once he stopped in the hot shadows of the silent orchards, closed his eyes and let his memory carry him back to the felicity of that moment. It would be wonderful to do it again, he told himself. It was on that thought his mind lingered, not upon the girl. Upon these reflections his emotions rose like a tide, sending his blood racing to temples and finger-tips. It brought back the exuberance of the early morning. It was splendid to be alive;

it was marvellous to be young. With it all there was a sensation of triumph, of success, of glorious masterfulness. He had achieved something.

§ 4.

All afternoon he wrestled with the mechanical intricacies of the gasolene engine which operated the irrigating pump. He enjoyed the task; it fitted in with his humor. His inventiveness and determination were aroused and when, with the aid of some sealing wax and a home-made gasket of packing paper, he stopped the air-leak in the cylinders, and the engine ran smoothly again, he could have clapped his hands and danced like a boy.

The mood was still upon him as he came down from the pump-house, and followed the irrigating ditch to where the bridge crossed. It was the shortest way back to the house and he was anxious to get home and have a cold bath before supper. A heavy pipe-cutting tool and chain hung from his shoulder, his shirt and pants were daubed with engine oil from his work and his bare forearms were streaked with grease. His head and neck were bare, his hair tumbled and matted upon his forehead. As he strode along, he swung his torn and faded straw hat back and forth, and broke into an old song of his father's:

"At midnight hour beneath the tower,
He murmured soft, oh nothing fearing.
For she loved a bold dragoon,
With his broad sword, saddle, bridle.
Whack! Fol-de-rol!"

The sun was rapidly sinking and already there was the cooling promise of evening in the air. A clump of young willows grew beneath the bridge where the ditch joined an old creek bed, and here he suddenly came upon a girl washing her clothes. She was sitting on a rock, her skirt pulled up to her bare knees, while between her stockingless legs on the surface of the stone before her, she pounded and scrubbed a handful of white linen. She heard his song and his step at the moment he caught sight of her, and stopped her work to

are at him. The song was wiped from his lips by the abruptness f the encounter, and he, too, stood still, returning her gaze but niling a little at the pleasing picture she made. She was pretty, e could see that, with short-cropped black hair, wavy and thick, anging in lovely confusion about her ears. She had a healthy- un-brown color, and a pair of full, deep red lips that were a ifle open, showing small, glittering teeth. Her neck rose from e tucked-in collar of her loose blouse, round, slender and nut- rown. Her forearms, too, were a warm tan, but her knees, wet and istening with the water in which she had been standing, were hite as milk.

"Who're you?" she demanded bluntly.

Philip's smile broadened but he did not answer.

"Rubber-neck!" she flung at him.

He continued to study her, his face alight with amusement. here was no trace, now, of the embarrassment and clumsiness he d known the night before. Her charming boyish attitude delighted m and he looked his fill.

A dark flush came into her face. She slid off the rock and began gather up the rinsed and tightly rolled pile of garments beside r.

"I beg your pardon," Philip said, recovering himself with a sh. "I was staring."

The girl threw him a quick, resentful glance as much as to say, should think you were!" but she did not utter the words. A ocking she had been washing rolled out from the bundle in her ms, and fell back into the water. She tried to reach it with her re toe but it drifted further out and headed for the swifter cur- nt. Philip dropped his cutting tool and chain, leaped down the nk, reached the escaping garment with two strides, and scooped it with a quick finger. He held it up as he might have done a owned rat and offered it to her with grave ceremony. He won s expected smile then: a faint twitching of full lips and a swift ance of dark eyes.

"Much obliged," she murmured.

"I didn't mean to be rude. I—I just couldn't help looking. . . . *do* know better," he added lamely.

"I'm not familiar with country manners," she returned, but the look in her eyes was forgiving. His words challenged him; he gazed at her frankly puzzled.

"Where *do* you come from?" he queried.

"I believe I asked first," she answered tartly.

"Well, I come from—here," Philip said. "This is my home."

The girl inferred he spoke of Vacaville.

"Work here?" she pursued.

Philip saw she had not understood; it amused him that she should draw her own inference.

"Yes, I've always worked here. . . . And you?"

"I just came to-day. My home's in San Francisco."

A light broke upon him.

"Oh, you're one of that crowd of cutters the Y. W. C. A. sent up here; you've just come over from Coachman's."

The girl nodded. "Who's the boss here?"

Philip grinned. "Well—er,—Mrs. Baldwin owns this ranch."

"I know that, stupid! . . . Who's the superintendent?"

"Oh—a fellow."

"Is he decent?"

"Kind of."

She shook back her mop of abundant black hair until it freed her eyes, brushing away a stubborn wisp with a bent wrist. The round neck was slim and beautifully brown; near the roots of the hair where the sun had not reached the skin was still delicately white; the hollow at the base of her throat was of pebble smoothness, exquisitely modeled as by a sculpture's inspired thumb. The loose blouse, as she flung back her head, revealed where the summer tan blended with the milky whiteness of her breast.

To Philip there flashed a sudden vision of his encounter with the other girl the night before, but instead of Rosemary's sweet oval face and dark chestnut tresses, he saw in the crook of his elbow the bewitching features now before him, the royal mop of black hair in lovely profusion upon his arm, the full lips lifted to meet his. A desire to kiss this strange and lovely girl suddenly filled him. He wanted to take her in his arms just as he had Rosemary and softly and tenderly press his lips to hers. It was the male instinct within him, wakened but a few hours before, wanting what

ttracted it. It was innate, primitive, as natural as the bee seeking he brilliant bloom, the moth fluttering after the flame.

His eyes, that were like his father's, warmed with the tumult of is thoughts. The girl saw, but there was an honest yearning ehind the hungry look that saved it from offense. He stepped up on ne bank to help her and caught her hand still wet from her wash- ng. Her touch thrilled him and he clung to it, betraying his emo- on in look and gesture. She laughed—a sweet, excited laugh,—and lacing one bare foot upon a cushion of weeds, sprang to the level bove.

"What's your name, Mr. Hercules?" she demanded.

"Philip," he said eagerly.

"Well,—much obliged, Mr. Philip."

She laughed again, tossed her hair, gingerly skipped across the oad, buried her feet in the soft grass on the further side, waded ne irrigating ditch again, and climbed the path beyond, that led where the tents had been pitched beside the alfalfa field. Philip atched breathlessly. From the flap of one of the tents she looked ack, waved a bit of twisted washing towards him and disappeared.

§ 5.

His small sister lay asleep in the circle of Philip's arm, as he ad of a new bleaching process in the magazine he kept open on s knee with his free hand. The Judge was deep in the pages of e Sacramento *Bee*, reaching occasionally for some stale French ndy of which he was extremely fond. Mrs. Baldwin, figuring counts, spiking bills and receipts on two sharp-pointed letter- ikes, murmured audibly as she added. Harry was out; he had one to Vacaville to watch a pool tournament. The evening was ke many others Philip had known: still, peaceful, odorous. The de porch, where the Baldwins always sat after supper, was cool d pleasant, the lamps gave out a cheerful radiance, the wicker ckers squeaked comfortably, the flowering fuchsias scented the air. ccasionally a winged insect flung itself against the wire screening th a pinging sound; the irrigating pump maintained a pulsing one, and far off Portuguese ranch-hands were singing to an ccordion. Otherwise the night was still, stars blinked through the

thick foliage of plum trees, the earth cooled after the day's flagellating heat.

"Take her up to bed, Phil," Mrs. Baldwin said, breaking the silence, "it's long past nine."

The Judge laid down his newspaper, took off his spectacles to clean them, and noisily cleared his throat.

"Am I to understand this philandering son of yours," he said, addressing his wife and referring to the absent member of the family, "is to be permitted to dangle about the purlieus of vice and prostitution night after night without protest?"

Mrs. Baldwin finished her addition before replying.

"It's the end of the tournament, Samuel. Larney Bassett's playing; I told him he might go."

"Harry's over twenty-one," Philip spoke up. "I guess he's old enough to come and go as he pleases."

"My son,—'for ways that are dark and tricks that are vain, the modern young man is peculiar.'"

The Judge flattened his paper and returned to his reading.

The significance of the paraphrase was lost upon Philip. He was long accustomed to his father; frequently he did not understand him. He tossed his magazine away and rose with the sleeping child in his arms. He looked at her affectionately, observing the long black curling lashes that fringed her closed eyes, and the fine line of perspiration in the creases of her lithe young neck. He carried her into the house, up the stairs to her small room and laid her on the cot. He undressed her deftly from long practice, and slipped her into the cotton drawers she wore at night, twisting her over on her side to button the garment in the back. Her little body was beautifully made and to her brother seemed the anatomy of a fairy. He kissed her gently as he slipped her between the sheets, and flung a light coverlet over her. Then he picked up the lamp and followed the long corridor to his own room at the other end of the house.

He was tired but his fatigue was not unpleasant. He had the comfortable feeling of a clean body in clean clothes and he had enjoyed a generous supper. Undressed, he dropped gratefully into bed, reaching for a book of Kipling's verse. He read poetry with the idea of improving his mind. He admired his father's erudition.

and his brief sojourn at college had stirred in him a desire to know something of literature, but he was generally too tired at the end of the day to concentrate, and only narrative poems brought him any enjoyment. *The Ballad of East and West* was a favorite with him.

But he did not read to-night. His thoughts wandered over the happenings of the past twenty-four hours, and he lay half-consciously dreaming, the contented, happy smile of the morning again upon his face. Presently he reached for the lamp, blew it out with a quick gust of breath, and turned upon his side to continue his dreaming in darkness.

"Mr. Hercules!" he murmured. His smile broke into a sniff of amusement. "The young idiot!"

CHAPTER III.

§ 1.

The cutting shed was a whirl of noise and confusion. Philip liked to see it so. There was no prettier sight to him than broad trays swiftly filling up with sliced halves of flaming apricots. The speed with which some of the cutters worked was marvellous. They received ten cents for each full box they emptied and these boxes weighed forty pounds filled to the brim, yet some of the nimblest made as much as two dollars a day.

"Box-es-s! Box-es-s!" The cry for more fruit delighted him. There was a continuous flow of heavy boxes being brought to the cutting table, and great filled trays being carried out. These were piled in towering stacks near the smoke house where later they would be sulphured. Up on the hillside in the glaring sun the sloping surface of the ground was covered for a hundred square yards or more with closely packed trays of drying 'cots. The flaming color of the fruit, vibrating in its intensity, was reflected on the countenances of the cutters, and it was among these he found the girl.

All morning long he had avoided the cutting shed. He could not have explained his reason, had he sought it. He knew he should visit the shed presently to satisfy himself that the new cutters were there and the work progressing satisfactorily, but for a long time he was content to study the building from a distance. About nine o'clock he walked up to the clump of tents next the alfalfa field and talked with the pleasant-faced woman he found there, busily stewing prunes over her improvised stove, two small girls watching her with interest. She was Mrs. O'Malley and her husband was the head or manager,—she didn't know what to call him,—of their band.

"It's gypsying, and Mr. O'Malley and I do it every summer

He's a school teacher in Alameda and it's a fine way to spend his vacation. Nothing could be better for the children. He's always been successful in getting a lot of nice girls to come along. We've been doing it going on seven years now, but we've always been down the San Joaquin before."

Philip said he would send over a side of bacon, some chickens and eggs, and hastily took himself away to avoid her gratitude, disgusted with himself for having failed to ask the half-formed questions that were in his mind.

It was nearly eleven o'clock before he entered the cutting shed. A swift roving glance told him she was there, and he was careful not to look her way again. He picked up some of the apricots and scraped off with a finger-nail the speckled blight he found upon them; he examined the chart upon the wall, noted the progress of the work, and jotted down a figure in his note-book. The foreman, young Bastien Carvalho, came within his range of vision, and Philip beckoned him over. It appeared desirable at the moment to find fault with the young man, and Philip proceeded to do so thoroughly. He called the foreman's attention to dirty trays, to dirty floors, to the slowness with which the work was progressing, to the lack of sufficient interval between the cutters, to the boxes of pits which should not have been allowed to accumulate. When he could think of nothing else to criticize, he stormed at Bastien himself, and finally stormed himself out of the building.

He was in a fine rage by dinner-time. He was persuaded he had succeeded in making himself only ridiculous and that she had laughed at him. He told himself he had heard her "snicker." He found Fennykiki and directed him to fetch back the bacon, eggs and chickens he had already sent to Mrs. O'Malley and then ran after him to swear at the alacrity with which he set out upon the errand. Harry brought the news to the dinner table that Bastien Carvalho had quit and Philip clenched his teeth in silent fury.

He went down to the stables after dinner, and saddled his horse. The animal had been in harness for some weeks and Philip forgot himself and his rage, in breaking him back to the saddle. He rode to Vacaville to find someone to replace Carvalho and by the time he returned, he was in a better frame of mind. He galloped over

the ranch and was pleased to see the picking was going well. Th Chinamen were busy with the Hale's Earlies and the fruit wa coming in thick, firm and a good size. He left the horse at th stables and climbed up through the vineyard to the pump house The sound of the engine was sufficient to assure him that it wa functioning satisfactorily, but in the back of his mind was bor the idea that a course from the pump house along the irrigatin ditch back to the house would bring him about the same hour of th afternoon to the clump of willows down by the bridge. But to-da the willows were deserted and there were only the bare rock wher she had sat and the eddying water to gurgle mockingly at hin He had the grateful thanks of Mrs. O'Malley for his supplies whe he found the courage to walk up to the tents. It was a relief t find the girl was not there but he could not bring himself to as about her. He turned disconsolately homeward with the hal formed resolve of another visit to the cutting shed, when the coo house bell clanged its harsh announcement of the end of the day work.

Panic seized him; she would be coming from the shed directl inevitably they would meet! He turned from the road and hurri out of sight in rear of the chicken yards, skirting the high-wire fen ing, and in safety reached the curbed well near the kitchen doo He could see the road from here but was hardly discernible hims in the gathering dusk and the shade of the giant fig.

She appeared presently with others. He could barely disti guish her, but he recognized the mop of short curls and the scar ribbon his glimpse of the morning had noted held them in pla She wore it under the hair and tied in a flaring bow on top of h head. They were all laughing, but he thought he distinguish the excited ring that was hers. A pain, a stab of loneliness, agony of yearning descended upon him. He shut his big hands a teeth, stifling a sudden spasmodic quiver that shook him.

"God!" he groaned through shut jaws. "Oh God! . . . oh *G-o-d!*"

§ 2.

The lodestone drew him to itself that evening. He found among the others helping to set their little encampment to rig

shing pots and pans and supper dishes, burning rubbish, folding
d arranging their blankets for the night. A young boy of six-
n, seated at the open doorway of a tent, was plucking at a man-
in and someone was singing. Scarves of wood-smoke hung about
d the odors of coffee and fried cooking were in the air. She
s spreading damp dish-cloths on the guy ropes of one of the
ts when he appeared, and she rubbed her wet palms on her skirt
ore she gave him her hand.

"Oh, it's you, is it?"

Mrs. O'Malley came bustling forward, anxious and eager.

"It's Mr. Baldwin, folks. . . . Do come in. We've just finished
per . . . and the bacon was *so* good. . . . We all blessed you,
so much better than what we brought. . . . I'm glad you came
. we all want to thank you. This is my husband, Mr. Baldwin,—
l he'll say as much himself."

He was introduced all around; they came forward one by one
l shook his hand, except the girl. She called cheerfully: "Oh,
ve met before!" and went on with her small task. He did not
n catch her name. He watched for a time, finding a seat on
inverted bucket and occupied himself with fashioning a ciga-
e. The boy with the mandolin identified him after some timid
stions, and he noticed the girl was listening as they spoke of
tball and the big intercollegiate game in which he had played
Thanksgiving Day when Stanford had been rolled success-
y to defeat. She stood before him presently and demanded the
l on which he sat. It was her turn, she declared, for fetching
er, and she permitted him to accompany her.

"The water in the well by the house is much better," he sug-
ed as they stumbled down the bank to the irrigating ditch and
ssed on the bending plank.

"What did you mean by fooling me?" she said when they reached
road.

"I didn't," Philip protested. "I didn't mean to."

"You knew perfectly well I didn't know who you were."

"Did it make any difference?"

She made no reply to this and they walked along in silence, the
pail occasionally banging against his knee.

"Did you go to Berkeley?"

"Two years ago. I was only there for a few months. They needed me here."

"Going back?"

"I'd like to of course. I had a lot of fun. . . ."

"Do you like it here? Like the country?"

"Why sure; this is my home."

"Oough! . . . I don't see how anyone wants to stay in a jay town like Vacaville. Oh it's all right in summer-time; it's fun then. But I couldn't stand living here; I'd die. 'Frisco for me every time. Don't you ever come down to the city?"

Philip hoped she meant if he did, she would like to see him there.

"I ought to go soon. There's some machinery,—farm implements, you know,—I ought to buy. . . . Where do you live?"

"Oh,— out in the Mission."

"Will you let me come and see you when I go?"

The excited laugh he found so sweetly musical rang out merrily. They turned off on the pebble road and walked up toward the house. The girl spoke of the giant tree and they gazed up into its green reaches. Philip found some of its luscious fruit and peeled back the black skin for her. They lingered at the well curb eating the figs.

"I don't even know your name," Philip ventured.

"Why should you?"

"Well, I want to know what to call you. I'd like to know who I'm thinking about."

"So you've been thinking about me?"

"A lot. . . . Tell me what's your name?"

The night was warm, caressing. A faint breeze brought the fragrance of apricots, and near at hand the incense of honeysuckle filled the air. A touch of silver upon the upper foliage of the fig-tree gave promise of a moon. The girl leaned over the well dropping pebbles into the water below, listening to the echoing splash. Philip stretched out trembling fingers toward her in the darkness but he dared not satisfy their craving. She seemed to him incarnate loveliness,—piquante, charming, irresistibly desirable. He drew back, fearing his desire, distrusting his self-control. He wanted—ah, so much!—to tell her the secret that was thrilling his

tell her all he thought of her, to pour out to her a rush of love, eming with endearments. Oh for the gift of a poet, the words a Romeo to express to her the passion in his bursting heart!

But he needed no medium of expression, neither words, nor und. Something told the girl beside him all he felt, some in- itive feminine instinct heard the throbbing of his heart, and tened to the beauty of the sound,—listened and stirred and rose answer. The man's lusty bigness, his masculinity, the aura of vigorous personality crept upon her, enfolding her caressingly, rsuasively. Philip longed for a voice to sing his love. The voice s singing beautifully, irresistibly, though he did not hear.

§ 3.

Her name was Marjorie Jones. She finally confessed it by the ll-side. She confessed, too, that she was only nineteen and that was going to become a trained nurse.

To Philip it was a beautiful name, a beautiful age, and a beau- ul calling to which to dedicate one's life. It was close to ten lock by the time the pail and its contents reached the end of the h by the irrigating ditch. It was thought wise to say good- ht here for the others were asleep and Mrs. O'Malley might be iting up for her. But it was long past the hour before he accom- shed his leave-taking. It seemed to him he could never let go hand she allowed to rest in his; to say good-night was to re- quish her forever; to allow the golden hour of intimacy to end s never to know its perfect minutes again. But the parting was lly effected, the girl quitting him suddenly with a smothered laugh a whisper that left him choking and trembling, the words he withheld all evening to murmur at the last moment still unsaid.

He turned to face a world flooded with the silvery splendor of a gic moon, a world transformed by mystic light to a land of pallid eantry and ghostly sculpture. The landscape was the same,—the ns, the laden trees, the gigantic fig, the chimneys of the old se, were still dear, intimate, familiar. But now all was resplen- t, caparisoned with witchery, emblazoned with silver glory. It ned a world peopled with fairies and giants, spired and turreted,

the pale battlements of enchanted castles rising majestically ove foliage of argent lustre. Philip stretched out his arms wide to th beauty of it, drinking in its entrancing radiance, filling his sc with its matchless splendor. Romance, with the moonlight, bathe him in her magic, and wove her enchanted spell about him.

§ 4.

There followed days of blissful happiness, in the thrilling con sciousness of each other's nearness, and nights of whispered conf dences, tender assurances and fervent pledges. The moonlight kep them company and that particular moon became their own. Nev were lovers more enthralled, never were man and woman more e raptured.

"Ah, Marjorie,—tell me that you love me! Tell me again an again."

"I've told you so,—a dozen times already."

"But say it again."

"Yes, I do,—I *do* love you."

"Did you ever love any other man?"

"Never. You're the only one I ever cared for."

"Will you love me always?"

"Always. . . . And will you?"

"As long as I live."

"Kiss me again, Philip. Hold me in your big arms. . . . could die in your arms. . . ."

§ 5.

July came in with a wave of merciless heat. The sun burned parched ground, wringing the last drop of moisture from the gas ing earth. In another fortnight the crop would be in.

Just beyond the shade of the colossal fig, Philip stood ba headed in the fierce swelter, wondering if it was more than girl in the cutting-shed could stand; the shed, itself, was like furnace. His father called him from the latticed doorway of house and Philip followed him into the parlor which was li

ed, its furniture shrouded in white casings, gilt-framed pictures otected by fine mosquito netting.

"My son," the Judge began with the usual reverberation in his roat. "I—er, I have no inclination to intrude into your code of orals or your private conduct. These are a man's own affair. ut I feel it an imperative duty both as your father and out of reect to your lady mother, to caution you against any philandering ound here."

Philip returned his father's look with a puzzled frown. He was turally a deliberate thinker, but the older man frequently confused n with his bombastic utterances.

"I don't understand you, Pa. . . . I don't know what you ean."

"Well,—this—er—this young female you're gallivanting with . you must respect the sacred precincts of your home. Such fairs must be kept at a safe distance. Bear in mind that this roof elters your mother and your sister."

Philip experienced a sudden congestion of pain; the blood rose umping to his temples. The insinuation, the injustice of the spicion shocked him; he was aghast at the outrageousness of it. at his secret,—the intimate secret which he and Marjorie alone ared,—should be bruited aloud in this degrading fashion!

"That's a damn lie!"

The Judge straightened himself and surveyed his son under avy, contracted brows.

"My son,—you cannot use that language to me!"

"I'll use what language I like!" Philip's voice rose trembling. tell you that's a damn lie!"

"Young man! I will not tolerate your disrespect! You will reet your words and we'll discuss this matter. . . ."

"I'll discuss nothing with you. You've insulted the woman I e! You've insulted me!"

"Insulted a pair of lovesick nincompoops!" roared the Judge. low dare you address me in such fashion? You're no child of *my* wels! I never begat the like of you, you young impertinent ippersnapper!"

Philip's passion flamed with his father's. He reached for the man, his trembling hand outstretched, inarticulate rage whistling

through his shut teeth in a sharp intake of breath. But with hi gesture, a voice rang out, a voice of alarm and warning, a child' voice he loved. There was terror, mortal fear in it, a more maddene brain than his would have heard. His small sister flung herse upon him, hugging his knees, and at the door of the room he sa his mother, white and rigid. Consciousness returned to him; h pushed his father away from him, sank into a chair and covere his face with both hands. Murder had been in his heart and th reaction left him weak. Silence followed, then voices murmured and figures moved about him; he heard his father's heavy tread, th click of the door-latch and then he knew that he and his mothe were alone.

"You've been raised differently to your father, Philip; you mus remember he has had a hard and an adventurous life." His mother' voice was like the refreshing touch of spring water.

"I know—I know," he said nodding. "I forgot myself,—but h had no reason to assume,—to imply . . ." Philip's face stiffene again. "I don't get mad often, Ma. I never lost my temper lik that before."

"Don't worry about your father, Phil. I'll have a talk with him he'll understand. . . . Tell me about the—this young lady."

Philip told her everything there was to tell. She was the mo wonderful girl in the world,—the only woman in life for him,— they were madly in love with one another,—she had promised be his wife,—and they were to be married,—married as soon possible. They had planned it all out. She was to return to t city and tell all her friends and he would go down in Septembe and they would just be married, that was all,—they'd be marri in September. Philip's recently congested face glowed now with different flush, his big mouth was half open, his clumsy han twitched, his eyes were lighted with enthusiasm. Then, gradual he became aware of his mother again, sitting silently, motionl beside him. He turned to her, a tear trickled upon her cheek, h bony hands were tightly clasped, her eyes fixed steadily upon face.

"Mother! Ma! . . . What's the matter?"

Never before had he known that hard, uncompromising nat to show emotion, never before had he seen tears in those tranq

ray eyes. He impulsively stretched out one of his big hands to er and she took it awkwardly between her hard ones.

"What is it, Ma?"

She shook her head, letting the unfamiliar tear fall unchecked pon her flat breast.

"You wouldn't understand, Phil, if I told you. There is some- ing very beautiful and sad about young love; it's a precious thing . . I think I knew it once. . . . Life is a hard taskmaster, Philip; e don't learn easily. . . . Love is rare, real love doesn't come to eryone; I'm glad it's come to you, even though it brings you rrow."

"But, Ma, there's no sorrow! I was never so happy in my life. e're just the right age,—we love each other, we're just *made* for ch other."

"Tell me about her, Phil?"

"Well,—I've told you everything. She lives on Valencia Street San Francisco; she's got an older sister, Constance, who works the Golden Rule Bazaar, and her mother has a lodger or two. er mother's had terrible hard luck; her husband died years ago, d they lost a lot of money. Her mother's a fine woman; Margie's azy about her, and she's awfully good to Margie."

"Margie—Miss Jones,—hasn't any prospects, any money of her n? . . . Be quiet, Phil," she stilled him with an imperative ges- re. "I agree with you it is better she has not. But have you ought how you will manage?"

"I earn fifty dollars a month here as superintendent and we uld take the superintendent's cottage."

There was lack of confidence in his tone.

"Have you discussed this with her?"

"Somewhat,—but she's not keen over the idea for she doesn't e the country. . . . And she's right, Ma,—what's the sense of my ending my days here and being a farmer all my life? I want to something better than that. I could make a lot more money in e city. Why Margie knows lots of fellows that are making a ndred a month!"

"But do you think you'd like city life any better than she does e country, Phil? I've often heard you say you were glad we dn't live in a city."

"That was when I was a kid. I never had a reason to wish to live in the city before, Ma. I'd live in Alaska with Margie!"

"And you'd leave the ranch?"

"Harry's crazy to manage it. There's no sense of our both being here; we're just in each other's way."

"But what would you do in the city?"

"Oh, I'd get a job, Ma,—I'd have no trouble about that. We might board with her mother."

Mrs. Baldwin was silent. She gave no sign, but Philip thought he felt her thin hands tremble a little.

"I rather hoped, Phil,—I fancied it might be you and Rosemary Church," she said at length.

Philip moved impatiently.

"I don't see why everyone's always hooking me up with Rosemary Church," he said petulantly. "I never ran after her, I never was stuck on her, I never asked her to marry me! You wouldn't want me to marry a girl I didn't love, would you?"

"Love?" Mrs. Baldwin asked. "Do you think you know what love is?"

"Why hang it, Ma,—you just said real love was awfully rare and that you were mighty glad it had come to me."

Mrs. Baldwin shook her head.

"Perhaps I meant *first* love, Phil. First love *is* sweet and wonderful. I respect it; it's beautiful and precious. The love I'm talking about now is the love that God tells us about, the love that forgiveth seventy times seven, that never faileth, that makes a man lay down his life for his friend,—or his wife. That's true love and it only comes after years of joy and sorrow that people share together. Love—the enduring kind—comes *after* marriage. I'm an American woman and I've tried to make an American home—and you're a good American boy, Phil, remember that. Rosemary Church has a great many things in common with you. She's American, too. She likes what you like, she finds amusement where you do, she has similar tastes. You have common interests; you've known each other since you were children, her parents and yours are friendly and would favor the match, and she would make you an excellent wife. She's a fine girl and she'll make a fine woman. Now your Marjorie may be all of these things, too. I've not met her;

've not talked with her. That's for you to do. Even if I felt he was not suited to you, you'd not listen to me. Think these things ver yourself; try to decide if you're going to be happy with her ll your life. . . . Don't fancy I shall lag behind you; I'll try to eep step with you always. . . . If you decide you want to go to an Francisco to try your hand, I'll not ask you to stay here. . . . think you're right about Harry. It will stir him up to manage ie ranch for awhile. . . . All I ask of you, Phil, is that you'll be s sure as you can be before you're married that this young girl is ie one that's always going to keep you happy—for that's all I ant, my son."

§ 6.

"Margie, what are the things you like best?"

"You're one of them."

"But I mean the things you like to *do* best?"

"Be with you."

"Be sensible, you puss-cat. . . . What *do* you like best?"

"To have you love me."

Philip heaved a helpless sigh.

"Can't you say anything else?"

She shook her head until her short locks whipped about her ce. He drew her to him and she nestled, like the kitten he some-nes called her, against him, burying her head in his shoulder, her nooth cheek against his neck.

"Margie,—do you think I can make you happy? Do you think u'll always be happy as my wife?"

She burrowed her head against him, nodding in the angle of s neck and shoulder.

He let her stay so for as long as she would. After a time she rred and kissed his cheek softly, caressingly. He caught her then d pressed his lips eagerly to hers.

"I'll be home this time to-morrow night," she murmured. "What ll you be doing?"

"Thinking of you—and missing you."

"The time's gone . . . I don't know where it's gone to! To-

night's the last of our moon. I'm glad I stayed till it waned. There'll be no one else you can share it with!"

"Marjorie! . . . If there was a moon to-morrow night I wouldn't look at it; I'd sit indoors."

"When are you coming down to 'Frisco?"

"Just as soon as I can manage. It's almost the end of the rush I'll be able to get away soon. . . . Will you write? Every day?"

"Will you?"

"Of course. But I'm afraid you won't. Promise me, Margie you'll write,—that you'll not let a day go by without dropping something for me in the mail."

"All right—but I hate writing letters."

"So do I. That's one thing we both dislike."

"But I like to get 'em."

"Me, too. We have *that* in common, too."

They had promised each other to wait for the moon and now a glimmer of dull red on the far rim of the valley brought an exclamation from the girl.

"There she is, Phil! There's just enough of her to say good-bye to us. Oh moon, you've been so good to me! She's shone just for us, Phil. She's been looking at us and blessing us every night."

"Look, Margie, what I got to-day in town. It isn't very pretty but it was the best Blum had. I didn't want you to go back without something on your finger."

"Rubies! . . ."

"Don't you like them, Margie?"

"Sapphires are prettier."

"He didn't have anything else. You'll wear it, won't you, dearest? Listen—," he slipped the ring on her finger, "I plight thee my troth."

She lay back holding her hand up before her eyes, studying the tiny red stones on the thin golden circle.

"You love me, Margie?"

"You know I do."

"And you'll marry me?"

She did not answer directly. Slowly she waved her young brown arms above her, her eyes still upon the ring; then suddenly she caught him about the neck and drew his lips down to hers.

CHAPTER IV.

§ 1.

San Francisco lay a gray tumble of wet roofs in the fog. Veils of vapor stealthily crept in over the floor of the bay, entwining the city in a nebulous web of soft mist. Standing at the railing of the ferry-boat, Philip filled his lungs with the salt tang of the fog. The city's water-front with its congestion of wharves and shipping lay before him; the smell of the sea and strange cargoes scented the air; the tossing wavelets of the murky bay licked the piles and the sides of ships like eager hungry tongues. Beyond the shipping lay the city itself, upon its hills, leaden, sombre, wetly dreary through the soft mist that pressed down upon it. The *Chronicle* clock-tower was a gray smudge against the slate-colored sky, the Flood mansion on Nob Hill was barely discernible, the battlemented castle on Telegraph Hill was lost to view in the thick scud that obliterated its crest. Had it not been for the feverish activity upon its wharves and docks, one might have thought the city itself was still asleep at that late hour of the day. A tug churned past, kicking up a fine lather of froth, and emptying billows of white smoke into the wet gray air. A tramp steamer was coming up the bay, feeling her way cautiously, her stream line awash with the tide. Now and again a plume of steam beside her smokestack was followed by a hoarse reverberation. Gulls wheeled and floated motionless over the muddy water. Occasionally sudden refuse from a ship's galley brought the flash of white wings, the jar of harsh, ugly cries, and the turmoil of churning water and flapping pinions. The bay itself teemed with life, harsh and vivid; the city lay above inanimate, weird, desolate.

But when Philip emerged from the dilapidated, dingy, red building where ferry passengers disembarked, the city awoke for him in a bedlam of life and sound. The cobbled pavements were thick with hurrying pedestrians, lumbering drays, rattling wagons, and

bumping, droning cable-cars. With the noise of the bay shut out, the clamor of the city assaulted him: car-bells, the clatter and bump of wheels, the cries of news urchins, the shouts of hotel-omnibus drivers, the tread of feet and hooves, the booming burden of traffic and the strident cacophony of busy streets agog with man and beast. Market Street, with its long line of cable-cars, stretched ahead of him, losing itself toward Twin Peaks in the gray mist. To right and left lay the water front with its contiguity of tawdry saloons, pawn-shops, and cheap pool-rooms. The fog-laden air was permeated with a thousand different odors: the acrid effluvium of the street, the scent of sweating horsehide, the fumes of stale beer, the aroma of coffee and straw casings, the strong essence of oakum caulking, the reek of spoiling vegetables and fish, the pungent spicy smell of Celestials and their haunts, and, occasionally, entrancingly, the fragrance of blooms languishing for purchase in the flower stands near the ferry entrance.

In the course of his few months' residence across the bay, Philip had visited and observed San Francisco many times but he had been a college student then and for him it had meant no more than a collection of restaurants and theatres, a resort in which to seek amusement. Now he caught some of the glamour, some of the romance, some of the mystery of the city; he felt its force, its intense individuality, its significance; he saw it a mart of vast commerce, a port of giant freights and cargoes, the great metropolis of the western world touching fingers with India and Cathay, the merging spot of the Occident and Orient, the end of the West, and the beginning of the East.

As he clambered upon a Sutter Street horse-car which would take him to his hotel, a sense of affection for the city stirred him. This was her home and would be his; here he would make his way; here he would achieve and prosper; here he would win fame and fortune. He was done with Vacaville. Henceforth he belonged to San Francisco, the city of fogs and sunshine, of winds and balm, of romance and adventure.

§ 2.

The day before the memorable Thanksgiving football game in which he had participated, the 'Varsity eleven had come across the bay and been quartered at the Lick House, and for this reason Philip chose that hostelry as his transient abode. The Lick House, even in the late nineties, was an old-fashioned hotel with high ceilings, stone flagging and echoing corridors. Most of its material and furnishings had been brought around the Horn in the hold of sailing vessels, but the gaunt caravansary was to Philip filled with pleasant memories of a triumphant hour, and seemed familiar and friendly to one who felt strange, and, in spite of efforts to appear otherwise, countrified. He was eager to see Marjorie, who was expecting him, and as soon as he had deposited his valise in his cold and cavernous room, he pulled on a pair of brand new gloves and hurried from the hotel. He stopped at *Maskey's* on Kearny Street and bought a box of candy, and paused again at *Lotta's Fountain* to secure a be-ferned bunch of damp violets. With these he boarded a Valencia Street car and, ensconced upon a seat on the "dummy," behind one of the stanchions to which people clung when the car was full, surveyed the endless stream of gay shops and awninged windows, as the cable-car droned heavily upon its way.

The Joneses lived in a flat over a grocery store. The building was a frame structure with a false gable of scrolled mill-work superimposed upon it to supply an artificial height. A bay window jutted out over the gilded sign of "Gillmore & Co., Fancy Groceries," and it was from that curtained depth Marjorie espied her lover as he descended from the car and began anxiously to survey house fronts, peering uncertainly for the number he had so often written upon envelopes. The girl's excited laugh announced her discovery, and her mother hastily arose from her chair, her sewing clutched in her lap, and peered curiously over her daughter's shoulder.

"'S that him?" she demanded.

Marjorie did not answer, but flew to the stairs which descended to the street door and "who-oo-ed" to her bewildered swain at the entrance below. Philip's face broke into a boyish grin. He hurried to meet her and behind the closed door there was a shy kiss and an awkward hug.

He followed her up the narrow stairway, reaching stupidly in the darkness for a hand-rail that was not there, his feet clumsily catching on the stair-treads. He seemed to increase enormously in bulk as he entered the parlor and confronted Marjorie's mother, he dwarfed the room and everything in it. He awkwardly held the flowers, the candy and his Fedora hat in his gloved hands; his coat gaped from behind his collar and his hair was mussed from the brief embrace below; his suit was glaringly new and much too small for him across the chest; his collar was of outrageous height and obviously uncomfortable; his satin tie, while not of the "made" variety, was weird of style and color and rode above his coat collar in the back; across his waist were strung the heavy links of a watch chain secured by a gold bar thrust through the second buttonhole of his vest. A qualm of poignant distress she did not analyze smote the girl as she introduced her lover, and her eyes were not upon him but upon her mother's cold, scrutinizing face. Mrs. Jones placed a large bony hand in Philip's larger one and for an instant their eyes met. But the eager friendliness was whipped out of Philip's by the appraising stare he encountered.

Marjorie's mother had a forbidding exterior. She fiercely loved her younger child, and was naturally antagonistic to any man who threatened to take her "baby girl" from her. She was a large woman, hard-knuckled and osseous; her features were strong, harsh and coarse; she possessed a long nose which ended in a knob, a wide thin-lipped mouth and pale blue eyes, much too close together. The gums about her front teeth had begun to recede, displaying part of the yellow roots when she laughed or talked. Her hair had once been golden—or had been dyed that color, Philip could not decide which—but now streaks of gray shot through it, leaving it with the appearance of ropes of molasses taffy in the process of being "pulled." She was a great talker, and covered up Philip's painful embarrassment at the moment of the introduction by a flood of words.

"Well, young man,—you're the gentleman my little girl's picked out to make her happy,—let's have a good look at you,—sit down,—take the flowers, Margie,—they *are* lovely. All I've heard these past weeks is 'Philip Baldwin—Philip Baldwin.' You're big, aren't you? How old did you say you were?"

An inquisition followed in which Philip answered with monosyllables, suffering an agony of embarrassed self-consciousness. Margie flitted about, now perching on the arm of her mother's chair, now dashing from the room, to come flying back and stare at him from the low angle of a nearby foot-stool. Philip had neglected to remove his gloves, and now the perspiration began to discolor the tanned kid in dark moist streaks; he felt his collar beginning to wilt, and the knowledge that he had forgotten to unpack his handkerchiefs and had none with him added to his general discomfort.

Mrs. Jones plied him with questions, heedless of his obvious distress, or the nervous apprehension of her fidgeting daughter. Frequently she did not allow him time to answer, but passed on to further interrogations suggested by her preceding inquiries.

"Father and mother both living? And you got a brother and sister, too? You can't take my little girl away from me, you know; you can't take her up into any old country! If you and she are going to get married, you got to live in 'Frisco where I can see her once in awhile. . . . You know any kind of a job? There's a friend of ours in the Spring Valley; they're *always* taking on young fellers. Know anything about book-keeping? . . . You get a good job and save up awhile and then we'll talk about the wedding. Got anything saved up? You don't want to get married too soon. I want my baby girl to be happy and if she wants you, I say she's got to have you. . . . But I like you all right. . . . You'll get on just as soon as you get a little used to city ways."

With this dampening assurance she left the room, gathering up her sewing as she departed with heavy tread.

Marjorie, alone with Philip, surveyed him once more from her own unprejudiced viewpoint. He thought her far more bewitching and charming than he remembered her. The lovely loose mop of black hair was bound as formerly with a red satin ribbon, passing beneath the wavy mass and ending in a flaring bow upon her head, but instead of the open shirt-waist and brown duck skirt in which he had pictured her, she was gowned in a blue soft silk, with cunning ruffles in scallops about the bottom hem, and a fluted white circular collar, wide and girlish, in lovely contrast to her brown smooth throat. Most of the summer tan was gone, but her skin

was naturally nut-brown, and her soft neck beautifully rounded and graceful as in his dreams he had fancied it. She wore high-heeled velvet slippers and her ankles, stockinged trim and sheer, were gracefully slender. Philip thought her amazingly jaunty. She seemed "dressed-up" to him; he was a little awed by her, hardly daring to resume the old intimacy.

"Gosh, Margie," he exclaimed, "you're awfully stylish! I wouldn't know you in that dress; you look simply out-of-sight!"

She hardly heard his praise. Her visions of him had been of a young giant of thews and sinews, unhampered by clothes, free as the air and the birds, fragrant of youth and the land that bred him. Sitting before her on a spindle-legged gilt chair, his knees wide-spread and humped-up, his great arms dangling, his hands perspiring in their new gloves, his collar wilting, his village clothes bulging from his body, he seemed loutish, countrified, even ridiculous. She wanted to laugh, but instead her eyes began to water and she became furious with herself and with him for her show of emotion.

"What's the trouble, Margie? . . . What is it?"

"Oh, leave me alone!"

She went to the curtained bay-window and looked tearfully out into the murky street and wet fog.

Philip sensed something of what was passing in her mind and was acutely miserable. He pulled off his stiff gloves and crammed them into his pocket. He wanted to smoke but he did not dare, nor did he dare intrude upon the girl's stormy silence, so he sat clumsily on the rickety chair and gazed forlornly at his red hands freed at last from their torture, dangling between his knees.

The Jones' parlor was a-clutter with furniture and frippery. In one corner was a flat box-couch covered with a striped portière pillows of beads and burnt leather-work; barricading the folding doors, which opened into a room beyond, was a three-drawered dresser, and above it hung a round mirror in a square frame of crimson plush. Philip remembered, as he stared about, that this room, Marjorie had told him, was occupied nightly by a Mrs Grotenberg who had lodged and boarded with the Joneses for several years. There were other evidences of the lady's occupancy

ut these were not flagrantly apparent, owing to the fantastic ssortment of furniture and ornaments in the small room. Drapes f every size and color abounded. Rockers, spindle-legged chairs, fragile onyx-topped gilded centre table, a small ebony upright iano, even the pictures were all hung with scarves. From the ed-tasselled table cover and the strip of rich maroon velvet upon ne piano, to knitted doylies pinned to chair backs and embroidered ink fringed silk looped over picture corners, there was not a ariety of drape missing. Staring at Philip across the room was crayon portrait of Marjorie and her sister. This was mounted n a brass easel of crossed battle-axes, a soft "throw" of Turkish amask festooned from one axe point to a corner of the picture. he frame that enclosed the likenesses of the two girls was a ries of gilt beadings, plush inserts and ivory-tinted *passe-artouts*, one upon another, ending in an ornate and florid gold oulding. Philip was much taken with the pictures on the walls. here was a yard of Anna Held girls in lovely color, and some fencing girls," each with a bright red heart upon the breast. On e opposite wall. protected by a glass bell, was a cross of flowers, tificially preserved, a white ribbon wound about it, bearing the scription in gilt lettering, "Sleep well, little Charley." Philip called Marjorie had told him of the death of an infant brother rior to her own birth.

The light was failing outside and the soft fog pressed closer gainst the window-panes. As the minutes slipped past and there as no movement or sound from the girl staring into the darken-g street, Philip's wretchedness became more than he could ndure. With an impulsive heave, he dragged himself to his feet nd was hesitating between attempting a good-bye or tiptoeing lently from the room, when there was an interruption. The click f a key turned in the lock below, the door slammed, there was a uick run of feet upon the stairs and a woman burst briskly to the room, bringing with her the fresh atmosphere of the g. She gazed from the towering figure of the man to the sil-uette of Marjorie in the embrasure of the windows.

"Well, I guess it must be Philip," said the newcomer's clear ice. "Welcome, Philip! Let's have a look at you."

Swiftly she lit the gas. She was a plump girl of twenty-

five or six, with dark masses of untidy hair and an alert, merry eye. She was not pretty, her nose being long and knobular and she had several red moles upon her face, a large one at the corner of her mouth, which gave that profile a perpetual grin.

"Say, I guess you don't know me!" She gave Philip's arm a reproving push. "I'm Constance! . . . Ain't you ever heard of little Connie?"

Philip did not know exactly how it happened but quite naturally she came into his arms and he kissed her in brotherly fashion.

The tension in the room broke. They all sat down and Constance took off her hat, putting her hat-pins in her mouth, and thrusting long white fingers into her thick coils of hair, while she talked. Presently she gave her sister a tap on the arm, a characteristic gesture, and pushed her in mock annoyance.

"Tut, Marge,—why didn't you tell me he was so good-looking? My dear, the man's actually handsome!"

They all laughed at this, and Marjorie's old excited peal sent Philip's heart soaring.

At this moment Mrs. Jones appeared in the doorway, voluminously aproned, a daub of flour on the bosom of her dark waist.

"Well, now I say, you're stayin' for dinner you know, Mr. Philip. We've been expecting you, but I don't propose to stand things unless I'm sure. . . . Hello, Connie!"

Philip cast a swift glance at Marjorie and his heart thrilled again as he saw the light in her eyes.

"Well, I dunno . . ." he began.

"Oh please, Phil."

"Go along with you, man, of course you're staying." This from the robust Constance, who followed her mother out of the room to help with the dinner-getting.

Philip held out his arms hopefully, timidly, and with a fluttering breath Marjorie came to him. He held her close to his heart, kissed her dark head and was happy again.

§ 3.

Dinner was late. Long before it was ready appetizing odors ifted through the flat. Mrs. Grotenberg came in and was intro-uced. She was a big-hipped woman, with a sallow olive skin d fine eyes augmented by arched and expressive brows. She, o, appeared friendly and interested, and by the time dinner was nounced, Philip's assurance had returned.

There was no formality about the meal. There were shrimps pick over first, a veal loaf, creamed onions and boiled potatoes follow, with a custard and doughnuts for dessert. It was as mple a meal as any Philip had ever eaten at home yet more liriously enjoyed, for in the midst of it a little hand crept into s empty palm and remained there till the conclusion of the past. Mrs. Jones served or helped, and sometimes Connie mped up to fetch forgotten gravy or an extra spoon. There s pleasant excitement among them, Philip felt, and they all, en angular Mrs. Jones, were anxious to like him and make him joy himself. He was not critical nor particularly observant, but e when the mother frankly freed a clogged tooth with a finger-l, he met Mrs. Grotenberg's gaze and caught a significant nce from under her fine elevated brows. He rather resented implied disparagement; he wanted to belong to Marjorie's nily and already felt loyal.

If the lady of his heart had been overcome by misgivings and n by a revulsion of feeling toward him when first they met t afternoon, the last vestige of these doubts and fears were ept away later that evening when, left alone in the parlor, lip was free to take her in his arms and crush her to him as liked, hurting and frightening her a little, kissing her until lay like a wilted flower in his arms. He was then the brawny ght of her dreams, her Greek, her Lohengrin, her young and y champion, while the strange young man in the store clothes new gloves of the afternoon, who had talked of her with such roprietary air, vanished never to return.

§ 4.

Days of discussion followed. Affairs at the ranch permitte Philip to remain a week in the city and he was anxious tha Marjorie should return with him for a visit, but this did not seem immediately possible. There was the question of clothes to con sider, for if she was to be introduced as Philip's "intended," sh would need some new dresses.

"I'll be meeting your friends, Phil," Marjorie pointed ou "and I've got to look decent. They'll be awfully critical, yo know."

"Why, sweetheart," Philip argued, "they're the simplest people i the world."

"Margie's right," Mrs. Jones decided, as Philip learned mos matters were decided for Marjorie. "If my baby girl's going t visit your folks, she's got to look like a lady. It will be all righ for her to go by and by."

There was also the vital discussion of when they should b married and as this depended entirely upon Philip's obtaining job and the size of his salary, he set about seeking employmen at once. He had come from Vacaville with a letter of introductio from Dermot Phelan, the kindly old village lawyer who attende to all insurance matters for the Baldwins. Philip had gone t him and told him of his plans and hopes. Phelan was a famil friend of many years' standing and had taken a special likin to the older Baldwin boy in the days when Philip and h brother attended his small Sunday school class in the litt Episcopal church. The old man had been grimly amused an interested and, as Philip had foreseen, promised to help. Phela placed a great deal of fire insurance through San Francis agencies and was not without influence.

"This may help you, Phil, or it may not be worth the effort took to write it, but Jim Mulligan and I were boys together Skibbereen, . . . and I've sent him a lot of business." The o man scratched his white unshaven chin and bit the end fr his dry cigar. "Take it and good luck to you."

Philip had known beforehand he would meet with no difficul

n obtaining work. This may have been due to youthful assurance or to a real faith in himself. He liked men, was at ease in heir company, laughed loudly and readily at their thinnest humor, nd had the confidence of knowing they generally liked him in eturn.

It was no great surprise to him, therefore, when he walked nto the offices on lower California Street of the *Colonial Insurance nd Indemnity Company*, of which Mr. James B. Mulligan was eneral Manager, to have his expectations realized.

"There's no vacancy now, Mr. Baldwin," said fat Mr. Mulligan, "but we'll give you a chance to make a place for yourself ere whenever you're ready to begin."

Seventy-five dollars a month was not as much as he had hoped o receive, but Philip, fired with enthusiasm, told himself it was nly a start and he wanted nothing more. It allowed time to nish up his work on the ranch, and gave him something definite n which to plan.

He met an acquaintance of his college days in Mulligan's ffice, a smiling, fresh-faced youth, named Wilbur Lansing, who ad been a star end on the football team. He had always liked ansing for his brisk, lively manner, his happy, eager disposition. hey had only a chance to shake hands as Philip passed Lansing's esk, but they made an appointment to meet at the *Richelieu*, ne of the famous flamboyant saloons of the day, at the conuence of Market and Kearny Streets. At five o'clock they ent a pleasant half hour together, over beer and *enchilladas*, alking of mutual friends and of football.

Lansing had graduated from Berkeley the summer of Philip's ast months at the University. He was still a football enthusiast, ad joined the Reliance Athletic Club and played end on the eliance team. There was to be a game against the Stanford leven the following Saturday at Central Park and Philip promed to come and bring Marjorie. He was drawn to this friend of is college days, for he saw they would be thrown together more r less intimately in the insurance office, and Lansing was anxious o give the help of which Philip stood in need.

The week fled too rapidly. Philip appeared at the Jones' flat s early in the morning as he was permitted. This must not

be before eleven, Mrs. Jones decreed, but the rest of the day until midnight, and sometimes even later, was uninterruptedly his and Marjorie's. They lunched at home or downtown and roamed the city childishly happy. They took the chugging dummy train to the Cliff House, wandered in Golden Gate Park or went rowing on Strawberry Lake. On Saturday they attended the Reliance-Stanford game, and Philip was deeply stirred by the old vigorous battle. He almost forgot the girl beside him in his enthusiastic rooting for Reliance and roared his approval every time Lansing tackled. He saw Percy Hall, his old captain, and left Marjorie to climb over several rows of benches to shake him warmly by the hand. The girl was cross with him when he rejoined her. She declared he had made her conspicuous, first by his waving and "hollering," and then in leaving her alone. At once he was full of apologies, begging her to forgive him, berating himself for his stupidity. But Marjorie was not in a forgiving mood and sat sulkily silent, her red lips pouting with disapproval. During the latter half of the game, neither spoke; and the contest, he had been enjoying so intensely, was spoiled for Philip. There were still no words between them as they left the field and walked down Market Street to keep an appointment with Constance and her mother. Fortunately Constance, in whom Philip had found a staunch ally, was waiting for them alone. One look was sufficient for her quick perception.

"Frozen faces! . . . Ain't you terrible! . . . Have you both swallowed poison? . . . Put your hand where it hurts, Margie."

They both laughed at this, Philip with eager relief. Constance offered to turn her back while "they kissed and made up."

When the square figure of Mrs. Jones bore down upon them a few minutes later, equanimity had been restored. They dined at *Tortoni's,* a garish, noisy, Italian restaurant on O'Farrell Street, and went to a variety show at the Orpheum in gay spirits.

There were other small differences between Philip and the girl. Their occurrence distressed him more than they did her. He saw that she was accustomed to having her own way, but he did not mind giving in to her, being anxious to please, but

ometimes it was perplexing to discover his very amiability nnoyed her. She was not satisfied when he gave in. He felt it as something more than her own way she wanted, but he could ot follow her further than that. He suspected he often irritated er, though he knew not how, and was puzzled by her readiness o hurt him. Frequently she stabbed him with a flippant remark or which he could see no justification.

On the last Sunday afternoon of his stay in San Francisco he as in a profound fit of depression. He was alone in the Jones' amped parlor where Marjorie had left him to go to her room to ress. Mrs. Grotenberg was giving a party; she had invited them l downtown for dinner. Marjorie had quitted him with a care- ss, pettish word, to him unprovoked as unwarranted, and her difference to the hurt he knew she had deliberately intended, cut im deeply. He sat with his head in his big hands in the dim arlor, his heart heavy with his thoughts, when Constance tiptoed upon him and gave him one of her playful shoves. A look at his ark face, and at once she was eager sympathy. She coaxed s grievance out of him with a few quick questions, and then illed his large hand into her lap and held it affectionately.

"My dear Philip," she said in a half whisper that Marjorie ight not overhear, "don't worry about little cut-ups. She's only a d and she doesn't know any better. Mama and I have always oilt her. She wants a piece of the moon and we break our necks see she gets it. She's like that. None of us in this world's perfect, il, and when you're pickin' out a wife you can't expect to get a od one already made. Bein' a wife's the hardest kind of a job; know it. And it takes learnin' and a lot of sense. They'll come ng fast enough, and Margie'll learn. Margie's got lots of good alities, Phil,—*lots of 'em*. Lord, don't I know! . . . What I ven't done for that kid! . . . But, Phil, she's worth all I've ever ne,—and a lot more. . . . She don't know anything about life; e's only a *kid*. Wait till you get married and she settles down. e'll learn; she'll be a good wife. And, Phil, she's crazy about you. u're the only man she's ever liked; there ain't nobody else. She's ld me how much she cares; I know. Be a little patient, Phil,—she'll ke good; she's worth working for."

Philip squeezed her hand. He grinned happily; her words

lifted a weight from his heart. He warmed to Connie; he was aware of a great sympathy between them; she was a fine girl and had proven herself a good friend to him, and would be a good friend all his life.

"Gosh, Connie!" he exclaimed now. "You're—you're simply *great;* you . . . *understand.* . . . I'll—I'll be good to her; you see if I don't."

He had an impulse to draw Constance to him and kiss her, to show his appreciation, but he hesitated and the opportune moment fled. She returned the pressure of his hand, and for a while they sat so in the dusk, his hand in hers. After a time she rose briskly, with sudden resolution. He watched her as she left the room. The back of her hand flashed to her eye with a quick motion as if she brushed a tear away. He sensed something of the yearning this homely, hard-working woman had for the younger sister, the years of sacrifice and self-denial gladly given that Marjorie might have what she, herself, had been denied. He was thinking how much finer and bigger was Constance's love for Marjorie than his own, when the girl herself rejoined him. He put his arm about her and drew her to him tenderly, and, apparently unmindful of the fact she had left him with unkindness, she allowed him to kiss her, accepting the caress upon the side of the chin, fearful lest his clumsiness should disarrange the roguish tilt of her gay little hat.

"Sweetheart, how soon do you think you can come up to Vacaville?" he begged. "Ma wants you awfully much, and—and it will be pretty lonesome and rotten for me without you."

Marjorie considered.

"I couldn't come this week or next," she said thoughtfully.

"But, Marjorie!" Philip's face indicated his distress. "I'm only going to be up there four to five weeks longer. I have to get down here and start working just as soon as I can, so we can be married. I want you up at the ranch for a while before I leave there. Everyone wants to meet—and to know you. I won't be there any more, you know, and it's kind of good-by for me."

Philip saw the full red lips beginning to pout, a sign he had come to know meant rebellion. He remembered her sister's recent

ords, and hastened to change the subject, smiling good-naturedly.
"We'll talk about it some other time, kitten dear," he said. Come on, put on your coat, I hear them coming."

The tread and rustle of Mrs. Jones and Mrs. Grotenberg ounded in the hall. There was a brisk confusion of final offices: ecking doors, extinguishing lights, dimming the hall jet. Then ney all trooped down the steep steps, and boarded a cable-ar.

But the subject was on Philip's mind, and the next day he opped in at the *Golden Rule Bazaar* to have a talk with Con-ance.

"Phil, you're a dear to come to me about it. Don't bother your ead about the matter another minute. Leave it to your big sister; ll fix it and little Margie'll go up to Vacaville bag and baggage. know how to get round Mama about that, and what Mama says es."

§ 5.

Constance made good her promise a week after Philip's return Vacaville. He met Marjorie at the station and proudly drove r home in the surrey. Passing through the streets of the town bowed to several acquaintances, laughing happily and self-nsciously as they stared at him and the girl by his side. He ught old Phelan's friendly inspection from behind the dusty win-w glass as he passed the insurance office, and waved gaily at him the old man made a pantomime of shaking hands with himself indicate his good wishes. Philip could not refrain from remark-g on the friendliness of everyone. He felt all Vacaville wished m joy.

It was October and there had been rain. The last of the sum-er had fled and the air was cool and clear. The haze was gone om the line of hummocky hills known as the Blue Mountains, and e distant rim of the valley with its dottings of white homes emed no further than a few hundred yards away.

Mrs. Baldwin was waiting to receive them when Philip turned on the pebbled driveway. There had been a brief meeting tween the mother and the girl before Marjorie and the O'Malleys

had departed in July,—no more than a few minutes of bashfully murmured answers on Marjorie's part and polite inquiries and appraising glances from the older woman. The Judge also had come to the doorway and attempted to make amends in his son's eyes by cordial heartiness. Philip could find no fault either with his mother's reception of the girl. Mrs. Baldwin was not given to smiling, but to-day her thin lips were parted in pleasure and she kissed Marjorie's smooth brown cheek with motherly warmth. Her son left them together and drove the surrey to the stables, his heart beating high with satisfaction.

Further progress to an affectionate intimacy between his family and Marjorie seemed to be made at supper-time when they sat down together for the first time. The Judge was his most courteous self, full of solicitous attentions and flowery compliments. Harry treated the girl easily, fraternally, calling her "Sis" to everyone's amusement, and his mother, although she lapsed into her habitual reserve, watched her guest with friendly interest, an encouraging light in her eye. Lucy alone was constrained and silent. Philip knew his little sister had taken his engagement to heart, feeling herself supplanted in his affections. She had cried bitterly when he went down to San Francisco; now she watched Marjorie fixedly throughout the meal, hardly taking her eyes from her face. This might have been interpreted as mere rapt curiosity by one unfamiliar with Lucy's excitable nature, but Philip saw and was impressed by the depth of her feeling. The child disappeared immediately after dessert, but Philip did not miss her until his mother whispered to him later in the evening to "take a run up and see Lucy." He found her in her room, her small face blotched with red from angry tears, her dress creased and rumpled, her hair a tumbled mass. What slight impatience he had felt towards her earlier in the evening at once gave place to deep concern before such distress. He tried to comfort her, but she clung desperately to his neck and moaned through bursting sobs:

"I hate her—hate her—hate her!"

Say what he might, he failed to reconcile Lucy to the fact of Marjorie. The little girl maintained a sullen attitude of resentment. Philip pleaded with her, her mother argued, her father threatened, all without effect. Lucy was neither rude nor open

iscourteous, but when Marjorie appeared, she grew silent and ithin a few minutes disappeared.

"What's the matter with your sister?" Marjorie demanded of hilip one day. "She doesn't seem to like me."

It was not easy for Philip to dissemble; he was too slow hinking. He explained the fact as best he could.

Marjorie straightened her small shoulders and pinched her red ps. For the rest of that day and on many occasions thereafter hilip paid the price of his small sister's ill-concealed hostility.

§ 6.

The Baldwins were anxious to entertain their son's promised ride and to provide amusement for her, but there was small pportunity. Some old friends came to dinner and played Five Hundred afterwards, but Philip felt that such affairs only bored he girl, as invariably the conversation turned upon matters in hich she was not interested. Dermot Phelan came among others ne evening and slyly joked with both, to Philip's acute uneasiness nd Marjorie's resentment.

It had been decided at the time her visit was first discussed hat there should be a dance in her honor. The Baldwins had ntertained in this fashion before, but Philip, as the Saturday ght of the party approached, was filled with dreadful misgivings s to its success; he was at a high pitch of sensitiveness, absurdly itical of his home, his family, himself. He feared Vacaville's ossible criticism of Marjorie, and Marjorie's certain criticism of acaville.

Among the guests came Rosemary Church. It was the first time e had seen her since the night of her birthday dance. He had ather avoided her. Once or twice he had caught himself won- ering what she thought about his engagement. He had all but orgotten the episode of the kiss, but the feeling remained that ntil Marjorie had come along to bewitch him with her gypsy eauty, Rosemary had been his closest girl friend.

He was unconsciously relieved when she greeted him with her d friendly manner, and delighted when she shook Marjorie's two

hands warmly. Later he observed his brother Harry with her a good part of the evening, and this seemed to lift the last shadow of obligation from his shoulders.

But as he had foreseen, the dance was not a success. After the first hour, during which Marjorie enjoyed the effect her pink satin "ball" gown had produced upon the girls of the valley, she grew restive and bored. She liked to dance and Philip was a poor dancer; other men were shy about asking her, and she spent most of the evening talking to older people, who asked polite questions with fixed smiles upon their faces, eyeing the pink bow on her black, bobbed hair, the lithe round neck, brown bare arms, small daintily slippered feet, and the details of her pink satin costume. Harry, with whom Marjorie would have liked to dance more, was in attendance upon Rosemary, and Marjorie hurt Philip's feelings by asking him, who the little "stuck-up country bumpkin" was. He informed her with a good deal of stiffness that Rosemary was an old and close friend, but at this Marjorie threw terror into his heart by declaring her intention to return to San Francisco in the morning.

But the next day he prevailed upon her to stay. They agreed that the dance had been "awful" and that the people who had come had been "perfectly terrible." They decided not to see any more of Vacaville's society. They did not want to go to any more "places," and were much happier alone. So further invitations to "come over and dance" or play cards were declined, and they spent the evenings wandering under the still leaves of the orchards.

Philip and Harry rose with the sun, discussed the affairs of the ranch with their mother over their morning coffee, and departed upon their work. Philip was intent upon turning over to his brother the duties of superintendent, but there were few details with which Harry was not already familiar. About nine o'clock Philip always found time to slip back to the house to find Marjorie loitering over her breakfast, his mother keeping her company as she passed in and out of the dining-room, busy with household matters. There would be an eager embrace and Philip would sit down happily beside her at the table, rolling a cigarette as they chatted. Often Marjorie accompanied him

hen he left the house, and Mrs. Baldwin frequently could hear
eir happy laughter as they disappeared down the road, or caught
limpses of them later beneath the trees, stumbling over the clods,
and in hand. When the new seeder and pump arrived which
hilip had purchased on his visit to San Francisco, he took
illa's place and drove the big truck into Vacaville for the
leasure of Marjorie's company beside him on the jouncing
eat.

But it was the still nights to which they looked forward during
ne long hours of the day. Together they stole from the house as
on as supper was finished, and theirs was the night to wander
here they chose and murmur their love to one another, un-
ecked and unobserved. They hung over the well curbing and
arjorie again flung pebbles into its echoing depths; they sought
ne willows by the bridge across the irrigating ditch and exchanged
r the hundredth time their first impressions of each other.

"You were standing up there and looked so big," Marjorie
hispered. "I heard you singing but I never paid any attention,
nd then I heard the chain you were carrying clank, and I
oked up and there you were staring at me, kind of laughing."

"And you got mad . . . and called me 'rubber-neck.'"

"Well,—you looked so sassy!"

"You were the loveliest thing I'd ever seen in my life!"

"Oh, Phil!—just think! If I hadn't decided to do my washing
at afternoon, we might never have met!"

"Dearest, I was bound to find you!"

"When did you begin to care?"

"From the very first instant I saw you. And you?"

"I can't remember . . . I was so mad when I dropped that
ocking, but I liked the way you plunged right into the water and
t it."

"You were adorable."

"I thought you were kind of fresh."

"You called me 'Mr. Hercules!'"

Their passion flamed hot; they were desperately enamored of
ch other. They told themselves that their love of the summer-
me was nothing compared to what their love had grown to be.
ney were never weary of kisses and clinging embraces. Philip

often carried her in his arms, and held her tenderly so for thrilling moments. At such times as she lay inertly against him his passion rode him with exquisite fierceness. Love wrapped them in folds of sensual delight; their joy, their satisfaction in one another, was unbounded.

CHAPTER V.

§ 1.

Marjorie returned to San Francisco early in November and ilip followed in a fortnight to begin work with the *Colonial surance and Indemnity Company* on the first of December. Wil- r Lansing, who lived with a maiden aunt in the Western ddition, offered him a room in the same dwelling, and Philip atefully accepted. Plans were immediately on foot for the wed- ng. It was Constance who suggested a way by which this ight be hastened since Philip and Marjorie were so eager for the ent. Tactfully presented to Mrs. Jones, that hard-featured dy's approval was ultimately won and although consistently intaining an attitude of unwilling consent, everyone knew she was retly pleased. Constance proposed that she herself should move o her mother's room, so that Philip and Marjorie might have the e the sisters shared. Philip could pay Mrs. Jones fifty dollars a nth for their lodging and board. The scheme had the double vantage of providing a welcome addition to the mother's income d of keeping the family together. When Philip discussed their rriage with Marjorie he had always pictured a little flat some- ere, in which they could begin housekeeping together, furnish- g with only the bare necessities at first, adding thereto from ar to year. But outweighing all other considerations was his sire to be married as soon as possible, and he therefore embraced nstance's proposal. Mrs. Jones positively refused to consider y earlier date than June, and with this Philip had to content nself.

The early months of spring were tediously long. He found his rk in the insurance office confining, and excessively tiring after active life on the ranch. He had never known any other form existence than one of daily exercise and physical exertion.

Even in college he had had his football. His duties now wer entirely clerical, and although he had thrown himself into the with enthusiasm, anxious to have his devotion and conscientiou ness early recognized, he found them far more irksome than r anticipated. Every evening he spent with Marjorie in the Jone crowded front parlor, but as this room was Mrs. Grotenberg sleeping apartment it was necessary for him to leave at an ear hour. Marjorie would walk with him to the corner, and in th light of a street-lamp they would whisper their final good-nights.

Philip liked the men at the office. Wakeley, the cashier, was tired-looking little man who chewed tobacco and constantly expe torated. Mr. Burrows, the office manager, had a round jowl, bulging neck, and a face so fat that when he laughed his ey were no more than two slits in his jovial face. There were sever other young fellows besides himself and Wilbur Lansing, and these Philip liked best little Jimmy Spears and Bert Cadoga his immediate superior. With them, Lansing and himself usual ate their mid-day meal, frequenting a saloon where a generou free lunch was served. They shared the excitement of matchin quarters for nickel-in-the-slot machines which paid drink chec on winning poker hands. If they were in luck, a full hand four-of-a-kind furnished them with sufficient drink checks to pr vide their lunches for three or four days. Philip's associat enjoyed gambling in any form but he usually watched them matc ing nickels or rolling dice; his mind was upon his approachi wedding and he preferred to save his money. But these we congenial friends and he enjoyed their company.

April came in wet and cold; the rain hung on until late in Ma Then abruptly the sun flooded the streets, the sky turned clear an blue, a lazy warmth enveloped the city, and Philip awoke or day to realize his wedding was less than three weeks away. Th days commenced to fly at last.

"We don't want nobody but just 'family,'" announced Mrs. Jon in discussing plans for the affair. "I can sit fifteen in the dinin room but no more! There's five of us and four of his, and th minister, 'n' I've got to ask Mrs. Phipps and her daughter Lizz she's helped out so nice with the sewin' and all. Then there's yo father's brother, Sim, who'll most likely send somethin' handson

There's room for two more and I guess Margie'll want Virginia Parsons. 'S there anyone special you'd like to ask, Phil?"

He hazarded Wilbur Lansing and Mrs. Jones snapped her jaws shut with finality.

"Very well. That's fifteen an' not another soul!"

But as the days shortened, it became evident that the Judge, with Philip's mother and sister could not come down from Vacaville. The old man had had a sharp attack of sciatica, was in great pain and in bed; Mrs. Baldwin could not leave him, and Lucy did not want to come. Philip's brother, Harry, however, arrived two days before the eventful date and brought a check for a hundred dollars from Philip's parents with their wish it should be used for his honeymoon expenses.

There was a good deal of talk between the young couple as to where they should go. Philip had secured the promise of a week's vacation from Mr. Mulligan and he would have liked to take Marjorie to the Russian River, where there would be swimming, boating and excellent fishing, but Mrs. Jones vetoed this plan, declaring Del Monte to be the only logical and proper place for a bride.

"But—my—dear—Phil"—she always addressed him so, when she wished to impress him—"there's the clothes the child's got! It's only natural baby-girl should want to show 'em off. She's never been to Del Monte, and it is not likely she'll get the chance again for a long time. Brides and grooms always go to Del Monte!"

Marjorie agreed with her mother and Philip gave way, although he had no dress suit, and feared he would feel ill at ease and conspicuous at this fashionable resort.

§ 2.

The night before the wedding Wilbur Lansing arranged a bachelor's dinner for Philip. Jimmy Spears, Bert Cadogan, Harry Baldwin and himself played hosts. They dined festively at *Zinkand's*, and Philip tasted champagne for the first time in his life. There was a musical extravaganza at the Baldwin Theatre which they found amusing, and upon its termination they trooped across the street to the *Louvre*, and sat at one of the round tables, drinking a great

deal of beer. Jimmy Spears became intoxicated and ill, and Lansing and Harry Baldwin grew objectionably boisterous. Philip had observed on one or two other occasions that the effect of liquor upon his brother was to make him quarrelsome. Harry had seen much less of city life than Philip and the excitement of the brilliant café, the lights and music, together with the beer proved too much for his rustic nature. An admonition from the *ober-kellner* relative to unnecessary noise, provided the spark to Harry's ready anger. A flash of fists followed, a table was overturned, considerable glassware was broken, and the party was ejected vigorously from the place.

Philip awoke on his wedding morning with a violent headache. Lansing could not be aroused, so his room-mate dressed himself painfully, and sought his brother at his hotel. Harry was too ill to lift his head from his pillow, so Philip faced the possibility of having neither relative nor friend beside him when he was being married. The wedding was to be at noon; already it was after nine. He decided Harry's condition to be hopeless, and in despair returned home, to find Lansing making an effort to dress. His friend declared that after a couple of "bracers" he would be able to do the honors as best man. He insisted on a cocktail to "fix him up," and assured Philip that was what he needed himself.

"Man,—it'll make you feel like a king! . . . Take a tip from your Uncle Dudley."

Philip dutifully swallowed the mixture Lansing urged upon him, but the smell of the liquor revolted him. They attempted breakfast but the bridegroom could not bring himself to touch food. The memory of the sordid night, his shaky nerves and throbbing head filled him with remorse.

A little after eleven, they arrived at the Jones' flat. The air was filled with the heavy perfume of lilies; the parlor looked empty and bare, most of the furniture having been piled in the kitchen or outside in the back-yard at the rear of the grocery, to make room for guests and ceremony; there was much heavy treading to and fro, and rustling of silk. Already half a dozen children and a few women had gathered on the sidewalk in front.

Mrs. Jones met Philip in the hall. She was flustered and

cited. She mistook Lansing for Philip's brother, and paid no tention to an attempted explanation. She was intent upon direct- g him where to place his valise and overcoat, when the odor of breath and the pallor of his face arrested her. Her glance shed to Lansing and back to Philip. The brief inspection con- med her suspicions. The thin lips whitened and her nostrils dened as she drew a deep breath. Theatrically, she pointed to e open door of the parlor and, after Philip and Lansing had tered, she followed, closing the door carefully behind her.

"You've been *drinking!* . . . You're *drunk!*" she blurted at em, struggling to control her agitated breathing. Philip saw that r nervous excitement would fasten on anything on which it could be pended. He recognized the ugliness of what was coming, and ed to steady himself with tight-shut jaw and hands. Throughout e torrent of abuse, he was aware of Lansing's slight figure near n, a silent witness to his ignominy. Philip did not listen to what e woman said; only the violence of her intonations reached him. e watched her congested, working face, close-set angry eyes, knobu- nose, and the yellow roots of her long teeth. He noticed she had a new dress of stiff black silk with a white, tight collar, and at her streaky yellow hair had been dressed. His glance wandered rtively about the room. The couch and bureau belonging to Mrs. otenberg were gone, and the folding doors to the back parlor led open, disclosing the large double bed, too big to be moved ay. Branches of mock orange blossoms had been thrust behind ture corners, and there were several vases filled with marguerites; e lace curtains of the bay-window had been looped back with sh white satin ribbon, and on either side was a great jar of calla es. It was apparent the clergyman would stand between them; e ceremony would take place there.

". . . no decency to you . . . think you're a fit man to marry sweet, innocent baby-girl like Marjorie . . . know your type . . . unk the day of your wedding! . . . the likes of such as you . . . fore it's too late . . . shameful . . ."

The voice went on, shaking with feeling. Philip wiped the sweat om his forehead and glanced at the closed windows. The room gan slowly to grow dark, shooting darts of red and yellow played

before his eyes. Far off he heard a bell faintly ringing. Then h was abruptly aware the voice had ceased and the door of the roo was open. He groped his way to a window in the back parlo and flung it wide, drinking in deeply the fresh, clean air.

"My God, Phil," Lansing whispered, joining him. He reste his hand sympathetically upon his friend's arm. "Whew! what roast! Say, there wasn't anything she forgot. . . . Guess I'd bett sneak!"

Philip caught his wrist.

"Don't desert me now, Wilbur." He laughed shakily. "I nee somebody to stand up with me more than they usually do. . . . Yo *got* to stay."

Feet sounded upon the stairs, and there ensued the rustle o dresses, the high-pitched voices and nervous laughter of wome Philip saw Constance shaking hands with the minister. She cam toward him presently, her homely face flushed with excitement.

"And here's the blushing groom, hiding in a corner," she sai gaily. If she recognized anything in Philip's pallor and glistenin eyes, she said nothing.

"Where's your brother?" she demanded.

Philip explained. He told her the truth; it was a relief t unburden his soul. He told her, too, of her mother's furious ou burst. Constance slipped her arm through his, and patted h hand, reassuringly.

"That ain't nothing to worry over, Phil. . . . Mama's all excite she don't know what she's doing. . . . Come along and meet t folks. . . . You're going to be married in ten minutes."

He was escorted about the circle and introduced. The clergyma who had put on his vestments, shook his hand with a profession smile. Virginia Parsons simpered and bobbed her head, murmurin "Please-to-meet-you." Philip identified the dressmaker, Mrs. Phipp among the guests. She was a timid, eager soul, bright-eyed an nervous, anxious that her anæmic little daughter should meet ever one present. He was listening to her asthmatic whisper, when t piano abruptly broke in jangling chords to the slow thump of th wedding march. At once an expectant hush descended upon t room, and the company quickly arranged itself. For an insta

hilip was standing alone; someone pushed him toward the window, nd he found himself beside Lansing. The clergyman made a otion for him to turn around and he did so, facing the room and e staring faces.

Virginia Parsons was at the piano; she wore a flowered hat, and e rose on top bobbed each time she struck a chord. Philip watched fascinated. Sweat began to manœuvre down his cheek but he ared not raise his hand to brush away the tickling trickle. He ught Constance's friendly eye and made a ghastly attempt to turn her encouraging smile. Then Marjorie appeared in the door-ay, dazzling in lace and white satin, clinging bridelike to her ncle Sim's arm. Beyond her, trailing in the shadow, Philip could scern the high piled yellow hair and the grim harsh face of her other. The girl came slowly toward him, trying to keep pace ith the lagging march. Suddenly the music ceased; he turned as arjorie joined him, and faced the minister.

The words of the service began but Philip was distracted. Cable-rs droned heavily by outside, clanging their bells, a delivery wagon ttled past on the cobbled pavement, factory whistles announced the oon hour in strident keys, the grinding whir of the coffee mill in e grocery below could be plainly distinguished. Gradually he came conscious of the clergyman's words:

"Philip, wilt thou have this woman to be thy wedded wife, to live gether in the holy estate of matrimony? Wilt thou love her, mfort her, honor and keep her in sickness and in health; and rsaking all others, keep thee only unto her, so long as ye both all live?"

Philip's voice failed him when the clergyman raised his eyes for s answer. He achieved only a husky "I will," but he immediately eared his throat and repeated the words too loud.

"I, Philip, take thee, Marjorie,—to be my wedded wife,—to have d to hold,—from this day forward,—for better for worse,—for ther for poorer,—in sickness and in health,—to love and to cherish till death us do part,—according to God's holy ordinance;—and ereto I plight thee my troth."

He succeeded in modulating his voice to an adequate pitch during e repetition, and his thoughts concentrated upon this effort rather

than upon the meaning of the words. He heard Marjorie murmuri
beside him and recognized by her trembling intonation she w
frightened. Poor little Marjorie!—There was no need of her bei
frightened. He was going to take the best care of her, and
awfully good to her. Now she was being made Marjorie Baldwi
she'd always be that for the rest of her life; there'd be no mo
Marjorie Jones!

Wilbur Lansing nudged his elbow and Philip, out of the corn
of his eye, observed his friend was offering him the ring.

"With this ring I thee wed, and with all my worldly goods . .

The matter of his worldly goods was rather a joke. There w
the ranch of course and some day he supposed he'd inherit his thir
but his mother was a comparatively young woman, and would li
many years.

". . . have given and pledged their troth, each to the other, a
have declared the same by giving and receiving a Ring, and
joining hands; I pronounce that they are Man and Wife, in t
Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amer

It was over; he was married; irrevocably, Marjorie was his
last; he had won her after all the months of anxious fears. He sa
a little "Thank you" of his own during the moment of the blessi
His heart was full of gratitude and high hopes.

The group in the room surged about them. All the men a
women kissed each other; Constance flung her arms tightly arou
the bridegroom and embraced him warmly, tears flooding her gr
eyes. Mrs. Jones presented a cold cheek and pecked him on t
opposite one, but Philip would not let this pass.

"Aw,—please,—you're a mother of mine, now,—don't be cro
Kiss me good, Mother Jones!"

His warmth, his eagerness to be friends again, overbore
displeasure. Her harsh face softened a little and she kissed h
again more generously. As she turned away, Mrs. Grotenberg to
her place. Philip kissed her upturned lips lightly but as he did
he was conscious of a warm pressure behind them. He glanced i
her dark eyes, a mild wonder in his own. She squeezed his a
playfully and passed on to Marjorie. Wilbur Lansing slapped h
heartily on the back while Uncle Sim gravely put a frail, wh
knuckled hand in his and shook a lean finger at him.

"A beautiful creature, young man,—a rose,—a rare child. . . . Mind you take care of her."

The wedding breakfast was announced. Philip gave Marjorie his arm and led the way down the narrow dark hall to the dining-room, where the table was piled high with columns of plates, platters of sandwiches, cold turkey, salad, and a great frosted wedding cake surmounted by a miniature bower of white bells and baby roses arching two tiny doll figures of a bride and groom.

By two o'clock it was all over. Philip sat through the long meal, playing with his food, trying to still the violent ache in his head. He was consumed with a fierce thirst, and there was no water. Uncle Sim had brought with him two bottles of champagne which was drunk warm from tumblers, but Philip could only touch his lips to it. The old gentleman made a long, hesitating speech and the company rose to drink the health of the bride, after which there was much hand-clapping and cries of "Speech!—Speech!" Marjorie's uncle came around to where she sat and pinned a gold brooch of pearls and small diamonds to her satin bodice.

The train for Monterey left at three, and while the guests were still eating ice cream, Marjorie and her mother left the table to get the bride ready for her departure. Philip found an opportunity then to slip with Lansing into the disordered kitchen and drink deeply, filling his glass two or three times from the brass faucet over the sink. His friend was full of admiration for his bride.

"My God, man,—you got a *peach!* She's as pretty as a picture! . . . But say, Phil,—how about mother-in-law,—hey?"

Philip shrugged his shoulders uncomfortably and was hesitating over his reply, when Constance hurriedly entered.

"It's half past, Philip—the carriage's waiting!"

The next few minutes were full of confusion. He saw Marjorie in soft brown with a snug little brown hat pulled down over her short black hair. Wilbur grabbed the groom's shabby valise and the bride's shining new suit-case and ran down the stairs. Marjorie kissed everyone all over again, clung crying to her mother, and then must run back into her room to straighten the new brown hat and powder her nose. More kisses and hand-shakes followed but at last came the final flight down the stairs amid showers of rice and thumps of an old shoe, a quick dash through the elbowing, yelling crowd on

the sidewalk. Lansing stood holding the carriage door, and in an instant it was slammed shut, and they were safely off, the horses plunging eagerly away from the alarming clamor.

Philip removed his hat, wiping his forehead and the back of his neck with his handkerchief, drawing a long breath of relief. Marjorie pulled down the window-shade to shut out the grinning face of a scampering boy.

"Well, sweetheart," Philip said, "how does it seem to be Mrs. Baldwin?"

Marjorie did not answer directly. She laid her cheek gently against his arm, so as not to derange her hat, and slipped a tightly gloved little hand into his.

"I forgot my umbrella," she murmured.

§ 3.

Their honeymoon was a week of cloudless happiness. The *Hotel Del Monte* fortunately was practically deserted. Some Southern Pacific Railroad officials were there with their wives, but no one paid any attention to the happy little bride and her big adoring husband. Philip and Marjorie experienced the exquisite delight of perfect love and perfect union. There was no moment of unpleasant discovery, no instant of shocked sensibilities or embarrassment. Philip was neither poetical nor imaginative, and yet he felt there was something sublimely beautiful in their marriage. It was idyllic, immaculate, fine. It was clean youth meeting clean youth, and he vowed to himself that nothing he would ever do should mar its perfection. Marjorie's Uncle Sim had indeed been right: she was a rose, a delicate flower, exquisite, divinely beautiful,—and she was *his!* She belonged to *him!* His to protect, his to take care of, and his to cherish. That was the marvel of his marriage to Philip. He rejoiced when he thought of the strength with which Nature had so generously endowed him. He amused himself lifting heavy chairs by the leg with one hand, or "chinning" himself, clinging by his finger-tips to the frame at the top of the bathroom door. Marjorie accused him of showing off before her. But he knew it was not that alone, although she admired his strength and liked its display. With her

small fingers she would try to make an impression on his hard, contracted biceps, striving to pinch the rigid, iron-hard flesh, and she would thump his bare chest with her small fists and laugh at her ridiculous efforts. They were always laughing together, and there was wonder and admiration of each other in their mirth. He marvelled at her femininenes, her daintiness, her cunning mannerisms, while the gentleness and tenderness in him, despite his clean-limbed bulk and prodigious strength, touched and stirred her.

They wandered through the lovely gardens of the hotel; they listened to the orchestra in the still evenings on the wide verandas; they found the ocean and its creamy beaches; they climbed the rocks and poked their fingers into sea-anemones, laughing when these thick-lipped zoöphytes in alarm curled their fringes inward; they collected bits of sea fern to be dried and mounted on white cards and made strings of urchin shells; they rode to Monterey and investigated the seamen's shops, the shells and curios they found there for sale.

San Francisco with its late afternoon wind and flying dust seemed drab and drear after the week of paradise in the golden sunshine and ocean glory of Del Monte.

Mrs. Jones met them when they arrived at the flat, and Mrs. Grotenberg also was at home, for it was Saturday; Constance was still at work; the *Golden Rule Bazaar* kept open until six o'clock. Much had been done to the bedroom Philip and Marjorie were to occupy to make it attractive: fresh curtains were at the double window, a clean spread was on the bed, white starched "shams" covered the pillows, while the marble-topped bureau and wicker table were overlaid with spotless linen scarves. There were some pink roses in vases and the pale afternoon sunshine falling on the faded worn carpet, gave the small room an added touch that made it seem all that was cheerful and comfortable. Constance arrived a little before seven, and there was a generous supper over which they lingered long and happily.

§ 4.

Looking back months later, Philip decided that the evening o their home-coming and the felicitous harmony of that lagging sup per marked for him the end of something definite in his life. I was the culmination of a week of unparalleled happiness, the la of the exciting days of courtship and honeymoon, the finale to yea of irresponsibility, the end of his boyhood.

Life settled itself grimly into a groove. His friends welcome him back to the insurance office, and he matched quarters with the again for play in the card machines, and ate his lunch in the company from the free lunch counters. The grind of office routi shut down upon him with its old tedious inertia. All day he thoug of Marjorie and looked forward eagerly through the long hours the moment of home-coming and the joy of her arms and lip Letters from the ranch told of the season's rush, the big cro Harry's difficulties as superintendent, his mother's anxiety about th Judge's sciatica, and Lucy's interest and success in raising squa for the market.

At the flat on Valencia Street, life was much the same fro day to day. Mrs. Jones, in a long gray wrapper, her hair a th streak of braided yellow down her back, managed his breakfa Constance ate at seven; her office hours began at eight, and s would be gone before Philip was astir. Mrs. Grotenberg, who w the manager of a branch dyeing-and-cleaning establishment Mission Street and who, prior to his advent in the household, h breakfasted at a coffee parlor near her place of business, now f into sharing his morning meal and they generally left the fl together. He liked Mrs. Grotenberg,—"Mrs. G." the family call her,—for her ready sympathy and interest. They thought ali about almost everything, and in the small arguments that arc around the dinner table he knew he could always count upon h support. He was drawn to her also by little criticisms of I mother-in-law in which they came to find amusement by confiding one another. She made him realize how actively he disliked M Jones. During all the months of his engagement and even after return from his honeymoon he had felt rather negatively about h

In his good-natured way he accepted her as matter of course; she was Marjorie's mother and it never occurred to him to think of her with antagonism until Mrs. Grotenberg opened his eyes.

"She's always criticizing you to Margie, Phil,—she's always giving you a rap. Why, all that talk the other night about marrying a poor man and what a poor man's wife had to put up with,—that was all aimed at you! Didn't you see it? And she's always against you when we're together and all get talking. Oh, I know that woman! I've known Pauline Jones too many years. She's a trouble-maker. Why, the other day . . ."

Philip could not but recognize the truth of what Mrs. Grotenberg said. He began to see that Marjorie's opinions, Marjorie's desires, Marjorie's whims were suggested or greatly influenced by her mother. Repeatedly he observed that when he and Marjorie discussed any matter or plan in the morning, she generally was undecided, but by night-time, when he got back from the office, her mind would be definitely made up.

"You haven't enough self-respect, Phil," Mrs. Grotenberg told him. "You don't set a high enough value on yourself. Marjorie's mighty lucky, let me tell you, to get a fine big feller like you. Why, before she met you, she only had that Tommy something-or-other, who works in the grocery, and pimply young Cadwell whose father's a policeman! She's lucky, I can tell you, and Mrs. Jones makes me tired with her remarks about your coming from the country, and being countrified!"

Philip laughed one of his loud guffaws at this. It struck him as funny that anyone should consider Marjorie fortunate in her marriage. Mrs. G. was generous to say it, and he liked her none the less for her championship. She was rather a mysterious woman to him. In spite of her sallow skin, she was far from being unattractive, and she dressed herself with a good deal of dash and style, but she had no friends, outside the Jones family with whom she had lived for nearly eight years. He did not know whether Mr. Grotenberg was alive or dead. He asked Marjorie about it one day, but the information he received was vague enough.

"Her husband's hanging around somewhere I think. They were divorced years ago. He deserted her and treated her something awful."

Philip's evenings at home were much alike. After dinner Mrs. Jones and Constance "did" the dishes and shortly after his entry into the family circle his mother-in-law impressed him into the service. Constance always protested at this, and invariably stirred her mother to a few vigorous sniffs. Philip did not mind. He had often helped his mother in the kitchen in Vacaville, but knowing he was slow and clumsy he was always in fear of breaking a cup or plate. He marvelled at Constance's speed in handling a dish-pan full of dripping china while he was polishing one saucer. She always ended by grabbing his work out of his hands and pushing him out of the way. If there was kindling to be split, a bucket of coal to be brought up from below or any work that gave him a chance to use his muscles, Philip enjoyed it. The high-fenced yard in rear of the grocery was cluttered with barrels, broken boxes, excelsior packing, jagged tin cans, bottles, loose paper and general refuse, and he spent a happy Sunday morning burning the trash, and cleaning it up. Marjorie and Mrs. Grotenberg never went into the kitchen. Marjorie usually elected to play the piano at this hour. She alternated in rendering *The Mosquitoes' Parade* and *Salome*,—two popular pieces of the day,—and seemed not to mind how much she slurred the notes nor how inaccurately she struck the bass. No one else seemed to mind, either. Constance would attempt to follow with a subdued humming, but got into difficulties when the music went astray.

After the kitchen was in order, Mrs. Jones settled herself at the cleared dining-room table and prepared for her game of solitaire. She was extremely methodical about this. A tumbler of water on a china saucer and two small cheese crackers were first set at her right hand; a tissue paper shade was then adjusted about the globe that encased the singing gas jet to keep the light from her eyes, and lastly the hanging ruffles about her wrists were carefully tucked in, to keep them from deranging the cards. The procedure night after night was invariably the same. At half-past nine she commenced to sip the water and took her first nibble of cracker. Philip, watching her with distaste, decided she resembled an old mare his family had once owned who had a trick of curling back her rubbery lips when she attacked an offered apple or carrot with her long front teeth. When the last of the mild refreshment had disappeared,

Mrs. Jones finished the particular game in hand, neatly replaced her packs of cards in their cases, carried the glass and saucer to the kitchen, and returning, announced bed-time for the family. It made no difference to her whether or not Philip and Marjorie were bending over a book on the couch in the corner, whether or not Philip was reading the football news in the newspaper or Constance darning a pair of stockings. Mrs. Jones' method of driving them to bed was summarily to extinguish the light and leave them in darkness. This had been her way as long as the girls could remember and neither of them seemed to resent her lack of consideration. During the days of courtship, Mrs. Jones had sometimes yielded to Marjorie's coaxing and permitted the light to remain in the dining-room after the hour of bed-time. The parlor was closed to them, owing to Mrs. Grotenberg, for that lady desired it for herself at an early hour. The dining-room was the only place that had been available for the engaged couple. But after they were married, Mrs. Jones did not see the necessity for this unjustifiable waste of gas. Young people, she announced, should be in bed by ten o'clock; late hours ruined a girl's complexion, and the gas rate was exorbitant; they'd find that out fast enough for themselves when they had to pay the bills! She persisted in her tactics of sending her daughter and her husband to bed, even after they had retired to their own room. If their light burned longer than she considered necessary, she would presently rap on their door.

"Time you were in bed . . . Gas costs money!"

And if this admonition did not prove immediately effective she would rap again, threatening to come in herself and turn out the light.

The bare suggestion of such a step roused Philip's indignation. He frustrated its possibility by fitting a key to the simple lock and locking the door. The discovery of what he had done incensed his mother-in-law, as he knew it would. The occasion came, when, after Philip and his wife had gone to their room, Mrs. Jones carried out her threat, tried the door and found it would not open.

"Why, this door's locked! . . . You've locked this door!" The note of surprise in her voice betrayed her chagrin. The next morning at breakfast she brought the matter up.

"You can't keep your door locked in my house, Mr. Philip.

There's never been a door locked in this house before and there never will be."

A certain deliberateness was one of Phillip's annoying mannerisms.

"The door to the room my wife and I share shall be locked whenever I see fit," he said with measured calm.

Mrs. Jones' narrow eyes flashed. She glared at him as he bent over his breakfast, then marched angrily from the room, her skirt whipping about the kitchen swing-door as she flung it to after her. She was defeated for the moment, but she knew how to retaliate.

Mrs. Grotenberg who had witnessed this scene made motions of silent applause across the table after Mrs. Jones had quitted the room. Philip was still too angry to acknowledge the friendly commendation, but it occurred to him that Mrs. Grotenberg's presence had not made his mother-in-law's discomfiture any more palatable to her.

That night Marjorie attacked him upon the subject.

"Why do you lock the door? I don't see any use in it."

Philip gave her his reason in his honest fashion.

"Mama doesn't like it. I can't see the sense of it myself."

As this called for no answer, Philip said nothing.

"But why, Phil? If Mama doesn't like it locked? After all this house belongs to her, and she has a right to say what ought to be done in it. Connie and I never used to lock our door. I don't like to be in a locked room."

Philip experienced a dull exasperation.

"Listen, Margie, dear," he said patiently. "I very much want the door locked,—and it's going to stay so. I give in to you about 'most everything; you've got to let me do as I think best about this. . . . The door's going to remain locked when I want it."

Sullenness and silence followed. She would not speak to him and when he came near her she pushed him away. She would have nothing to do with him for the few days her displeasure lasted. He saw her whispering with her mother, and inwardly his resentment burned, but his determination remained unshaken and every night he locked the door.

§ 5.

When the football season commenced, Philip's interest was keenly oused. Lansing persuaded him to join the Reliance Athletic ub. His ability as a football player was so well known that his embership in the Club was an asset and therefore his initiation e was remitted. He filled his old position as tackle on the Reliance am and fiercely enjoyed the games on Saturday afternoons with e California and Stanford 'Varsities at Central Park. Marjorie me to watch him play, but her interest began to fade after the velty of his participation passed away. Once or twice her school end, Virginia Parsons, accompanied her, but Virginia and other l friends had more interesting engagements for Saturday after- ons and preferred to attend football contests—when they went all—with male escorts. Marjorie did not care to go alone, and er awhile did not go at all. She had no sympathy with Philip's erest in the game; she resented the two evenings a week it took n to the gymnasium of the Reliance Club to practise signals, and re particularly did she object to the expense of this diversion, the matter of his small monthly dues and the outlay for football alia. Football became eventually a subject of serious disagree- nt between them, and Philip would have willingly given up the ne and resigned from the Club had it not involved disrupting team in the very middle of the season.

Sundays were always happy days for them both. He and rjorie spent them out at the Cliff House, which could be reached twenty cents' carfare, or took long walks in the Park to the ildren's Playground, or tramps to the lighthouse at Bolinas or nicked on the hills in Berkeley back of the University. They re alone, and in one another's simple company found much to use them. They laughed a great deal and practised small jokes on each other,—an infinite source of entertainment. Usually y took sandwiches and fruit with them, and it was quite the nt of the day to search for a secluded and attractive spot in ich to enjoy their lunch.

Money was a problem. Mrs. Jones frequently gave her daughter dollar or two, which Marjorie readily accepted, and sometimes

begged, Philip suspected. He could not bring himself to ask he not to take it, for it provided her with means to purchase smal pleasures for herself that he could not supply. It galled him, how ever, to think she asked for the money, and he did not like he spending it on himself. He gave her ten dollars a month, but h knew this did not begin to include what she spent.

"Let's dine downtown to-night, Phil," she would brightly sug gest. "What's the good of going home? Let's have dinner a *Campi's*. I've got nearly two dollars. . . . Let's see . . . a dolla and six bits."

"But, Margie . . ."

"Oh, hush! Don't be gloomy . . . Come on,—to please me. . . . If you love me!"

"If you love me" was a phrase of mystic significance. Used b either, it made compliance with the other's wish imperative. The agreed that it was not to be employed lightly but resorted to as last appeal in any matter of grave importance. Marjorie made us of its talismanic power much too readily, Philip thought, but H always respected it nevertheless. There was nothing he would n do for his wife to show that he loved her. If whatever she wishe was put before him in the light of a test of love, he could not refu to accept the challenge and give her the proof she demanded.

"All right . . . only . . ."

"Oh Phillipio—you're a darling! You're always so sweet!"

Her praise never failed to thrill him pleasantly.

"Shall I 'phone home?"

"No . . . better let me. . . . Mama might be cross, it's so la letting her know. *I'll* talk to her."

But it meant her paying for his dinner with her mother's mon and that was an unpleasant and an irritating circumstance for h to accept.

The occasion inevitably came when Mrs. Jones threw the f in his teeth.

"Let—me—tell—you, Mr. Philip,—Margie gets her spendi money from *me*—and not from you, and I guess under the circu stance it's none of your business what she does with it!"

He had to accept this too, but it was bitter and left a s taste in his mouth. He chafed at his inability to enlarge his inco

Against Bert Cadogan's advice, he mustered sufficient courage to ask for a raise and had his request curtly refused. Immediately after the last game of the football season, he resigned from the Reliance Club and refused Wilbur Lansing's offer of a loan of five dollars with which to buy two coveted seats for the big California-Stanford game on Thanksgiving Day. The very evening he declined his friend's generous proposition, Marjorie jangled two dollars before his eyes. She would not tell him where she had got them, although he knew well enough, and later on he saw her spend the money for matinée seats at the Alcazar for herself and Virginia Parsons.

§ 6.

Constance enjoyed a warm friendship with a girl named Elsie Trevor, who had worked with her at the *Golden Rule Bazaar*. There had been much talk of this toy concern taking over the management of *The Emporium*, a new department store, hitherto a failure as a commercial venture. Constance brought home the information that the rumor was a fact, and at the same time expressed a wish to be away from home for a few nights to visit Elsie Trevor in Berkeley. Elsie's mother was going to Los Angeles for ten days, and there would be no one at home to do the cooking for Elsie and her brother.

"Elsie's been wanting me to come over for ever so long. She's got a younger brother, Stanley, who works in a bank. She ain't no good in the kitchen, and while Mrs. Trevor's away she wants me to come over an' help out getting dinner. . . . D'you think you can spare me, Mama,—with the dishes and all? I'll be gone no more than a week."

Philip liked his wife's ready offer to help in her sister's absence.

"Oh, go along, Connie,—for Heaven's sake! I'll help Mama. You make me tired! You're always doing things for me and everybody else, and if there's one teeny thing you'd like to do yourself, you make the greatest fuss about it. I can wash dishes just as well as anybody and I don't see why I shouldn't."

Philip found it far more pleasant in the kitchen with Marjorie were helping to clean up after dinner. He elected as his task the washing of the pots and pans, as he preferred this dirtier, more

vigorous work. But Mrs. Jones could not bring herself to look with complacency upon the younger girl as an assistant. She screwed up her lips and vented small bursts of impatient breaths as she regarded her daughter, elbow-deep in soapy dish water or scrubbing a greasy plate with the sink's wire brush.

"Tss-t,—Marjorie! What'll become of your hands, my child? Haven't you got a pair of old gloves or somethin'? My *dear!* I've struggled all these years so you could have decent hands,—it'll take a month's lemon juice to get 'em fit again. . . . And you're *ruining* your skirt! The water's sloppin' right through your apron! There's no need of your being so awfully vigorous about it, Margie!"

The last was a deserved remonstrance, for her daughter threw herself into the work with unnecessary thoroughness. Philip, himself, could see that however well-intentioned his wife might be, she was not suited to kitchen tasks. She took twice the time to then her sister did, but was full of criticisms of her mother and the absent Constance.

"Mama,—will you kindly tell me, what's the use of letting the water run on these greasy dishes? It spatters all over everything and gets the floor dirty and you've got to have decent hot water on the stove; soaking don't do any good. . . . And I should think it's about time you and Connie got another sink brush. . . . Ugh, I'm going to boil this one right now. . . . The swill pail's got a leak in it,—did you know that, Mama? Connie's been putting folded newspaper in the bottom for I don't know how long! I suppose she would go on that way till kingdom come!"

Her persistent fault-finding finally drew an impatient protest from her mother.

"Marjorie—Marjorie,—will you ever get tired talking! Mercy child,—you're terrible when you get started. Connie and I've got along quite peaceable in here for years and we've never had no ructions. . . . I must say I'll be glad when Con's back."

Marjorie lapsed into gloomy silence at this, and Philip observed that her mother immediately began to fidget. She was always a victim to her younger daughter's moods. Marjorie's whims, her most casual desires must be gratified if Marjorie's mama could possibly manage it. That meant Marjorie's gratitude and Marjorie's favor and for these Mrs. Jones desperately hungered. If Marjorie

vas hurt or angry, her mother suffered as acutely in her displeasure s did Philip himself. Although he did not like his mother-in-law, er pathetic helplessness at her daughter's hands touched his sym- athy. He looked at her osseous figure, the angular elbows and ips, the knuckled hands and bony fingers, the long face and ugly ose with the close-set eyes, dolorously distorted now, in her abject ontrition, and ridiculous as she appeared, he could not but feel orry for her.

He had occasion to appreciate for the hundredth time, how much ne harmony of the small household depended upon Constance's killful manipulation when difficulties arose. It was only the third vening she had been away, and yet they were all irritable, and ritical of one another. Mrs. Grotenberg had had a passage of ords with Mrs. Jones the night before, and Marjorie, Philip thought, as especially cross. He had missed her all day and for the first me found her, upon his home-coming, indifferent to his affection.

When they were going to bed later on he indiscreetly asked ie reason. At once she bristled with impatience; the mood of sentment her mother had occasioned was still upon her and she efused to be coaxed out of it. She had elected to go to bed at an rly hour, preferring to be in her own room rather than where er mother was, and now she was restless, not yet ready for sleep it at a loss how to occupy herself. She decided one of her hats eeded retrimming, and curled herself up in the middle of the bed, id armed with a pair of scissors, proceeded to demolish it. Philip as deeply interested in the evening paper which contained a view of the season's football, and was pleased to discover his own ame mentioned more than once. He sat with his stockinged feet erched on the edge of the bed, tilting back in his chair, comfortably noking. He heard his mother-in-law passing in the hall on her ay to her own room a little after nine o'clock. As he foresaw, r footsteps hesitated at their door and there was a gentle rap d a conciliatory "good night."

He called a cheerful "Good night, Mother Jones," but Marjorie swered only grumpily.

He lowered the edge of his paper to observe his wife over its p. He wanted to ask her why she was so unnecessarily short, t feared her unreasonable mood. She was decidedly out of sorts;

even the retrimming of the hat she had wrecked was not proceeding satisfactorily. Angry or not, she was a lovely picture, he decided. She sat cross-legged, tailor fashion, in the middle of the bed, her lovely mop of short black curls, unbound for the night, hung loosely about her face, revealing only a brown cheek and chin, and pursed preoccupied lips as she bent over her work. The lines of her young boyish figure showed through her sheer night-gown, and beneath one bent knee protruded a bare pink foot and five pink toes. Occasionally she flung back her hair and twisted her head from side to side as she critically surveyed the effect of her millinery efforts, held at arm's length.

Philip hastily reverted to his paper, when with an exclamation of annoyance over her ill success, she flung the trimmings of the hat into its crown, and wiggling off the bed tossed the hat itself to the top shelf of the closet. But here an unfortunate discovery increased her irritation.

"Philip Baldwin!" She pitched the coat he had just taken off from the hook where it was hanging to the middle of the floor.

"I've *asked* you, and *asked* you not to hang your clothes over my shirt-waists. . . . There's that all crumpled and I was going to wear it to-morrow to the matinée with Virginia! . . . I'll have to go to all the fuss of ironing it out in the morning!"

"I'm sorry, Marjorie,—I'm awfully sorry," Philip said penitently.

"That does no good . . ."

A sneeze interrupted her. Philip had raised the window some time before to air the room which had been getting close and full of cigarette smoke. The question of ventilation had always been a vexatious one between them. Philip had slept from earliest boyhood with his window flung wide open; Marjorie, he found, had been content with only a few inches. She asserted it was impossible for her to sleep with a wind blowing on her head, and Philip frequently had awakened with a dull headache, as the result of lack of fresh air.

Now, with an angry exclamation, she reached for the window and closed it with a bang.

"That stays shut! . . . You don't care whether your wife catch her death of cold or not. I'm tired of it. I won't have that window raised any more!"

Philip frowned. Her arbitrary tone nettled him. He rose heavily, folded his half read paper and picked up the offending coat. There was no use talking to Marjorie to-night; she was utterly and outrageously unreasonable. He commenced resignedly to undress.

It was his habit to shave at night and when he returned from the bath-room where he was accustomed to perform this operation, he found Marjorie already in bed, her dark head sunk deep in a pillow, her face toward the wall, a round brown elbow just outside the covers. She was only a little girl after all, Philip reflected,—much like his sister, Lucy, whom many a night he had tucked off to bed.

He looked ruefully at the tightly shut window and sniffed the close, smoky atmosphere. It was poisonous to breathe such air; by morning it would be deadly, and to-morrow was to be a particularly hard day at the office. He glanced at the recumbent Marjorie, turned out the gas and cautiously raised the window sash. Instantly there was a commotion in the bed.

"Phil—shut that window!"

"But, Marjorie—listen! The room actually stinks!" He could see his wife's figure sitting up in bed.

"You shut that window."

"Listen, sweetheart,—we'll both have headaches in the morning . . ."

"'Re you going to shut it?"

"But, dearest, listen just a minute . . ."

With a quick motion Marjorie flung back the bed clothes and got to her feet. Without an instant's pause she went to the door, opened it and disappeared into the hall. Philip stood perplexed and wondering. He heard her go to her mother's room; he heard the door shut briskly; he heard the murmur of voices. He did not understand what she was about. At first he believed she sought her mother's sympathy, possibly her intervention. The smothered mutter of voices continued, then came intervals of quiet, finally silence. The truth came to him gradually; it was some time before his slow mind accepted the fact that his wife had taken Constance's place beside her mother, and had deserted him for the night.

He sat down heavily in one of the chairs. He tried to consider

calmly the import of what Marjorie had done, but he found it impos sible to think either clearly or logically. He was aware that th skin of his face was burning hot, and that he was fighting to keep grip on his rising anger. He did not know how to analyze his feel ings, but he was aware of being grievously hurt, outrageousl affronted. Marjorie had gone too far; she had made a mistake; h could not allow her to treat him so casually. If Marjorie though married life was like that, she'd have to be shown very plainly tha it wasn't. He did not understand the hurt in his heart, the feelin that their intimacy had been outraged; Marjorie had desecrate something which was tremendously sacred.

Far into the night he sat in the dark room considering th matter. At times his anger flared hotly, but with clenched teeth an shut fists he curbed the impulse to seek his rebellious wife and dra her from beside the old and withered person of his mother-in-law That would be a madman's act, he told himself, and now as neve before in his life he must think sanely, and adopt a wise pla of action.

He knew himself to be good-natured and easy-going, while a far as Marjorie was concerned he had been both lenient and patien But now he must put his foot down. She was his wife, she belonge to him, and her place and duty were by his side. She had promise to honor and obey him; she had made the promise lightly enoug as most brides did, he supposed, but now he would have to sho her plainly what marriage meant.

And the first thing to be done, he decided, was to bring to speedy end this living in the same house with her mother. Marjor must no longer have someone to run to every time they disagree Mrs. Grotenberg had told him more than once that his mother-in-la never missed a chance to make light of him to his wife. Inevitab the hour would come when Marjorie would think of him with co tempt. There was the question, too, of the pocket money she g from her mother. This was a source of irritation to him, and h had a deep conviction that it was not starting their life togeth on a sound basis. He denied himself small luxuries, and it w only right she should do the same. Every thought strengthen him in the opinion that a change must be made. There was no u putting it off any longer. She had deeply offended him, as sh

would realize herself in the morning, and it was better to take a stand now and face the issue.

By midnight his head was aching badly. He threw open the forgotten window, and leaned out upon the sill, filling his lungs with the cold, damp night air. A policeman stood under a street light on the corner, the star upon his breast catching a yellow reflection from the lamp above his head. As Philip watched, the man sauntered into the shadow of a high board fence that flanked the opposite house, and in the dim obscurity of its protection Philip caught the bright glow of a stolen cigarette. A horse cab rattled down the cobbled surface of the inclined pavement beneath the window and slid smoothly on to the asphalt of Valencia Street. A freight train was heavily puffing up the grade from Third and Townsend Streets; the fireman was stoking and Philip could see a vivid glow from the open door of the boiler fires on the canopy of curling smoke that trailed behind. There was a nimble wind coming in from the ocean and patches of low fog fled past overhead, shutting out every other minute the pale watery light of a dying moon.

Wearily he turned from the window and lay down upon the empty bed, while once more the wheeling flight of his thoughts began its endless circle. He slept little. Waking from a fitful doze, he would fling out his arm across the vacant place beside him, hoping the fear which oppressed him as he slept was dream and not reality. At five o'clock he gave up trying to sleep, dressed, and let himself noiselessly out of the house. He had no wish to face either Marjorie or her mother until he had something definite to propose.

On lower Van Ness Avenue near Eddy and Turk Streets, he was aware there were a number of boarding houses. He had passed them occasionally as he walked downtown. At noon-time he hurried to this neighborhood and investigated its possibilities. He was gratified to find several fairly respectable, clean looking places where he and Marjorie could live for ten dollars a week. He would have liked to talk the whole matter over with Constance, but there was no time during the day to visit the *Golden Rule Bazaar,* and he knew she would be taking an early boat to Berkeley with Elsie Trevor as soon as the store closed.

So strongly did he feel the need of a sympathetic ear into whic to pour his grievances, and a critic who would approve his course that on his way home late in the afternoon he dropped off the ca at Mission Street and found Mrs. Grotenberg in her dyeing-and cleaning establishment. She was delighted at sight of him and too him into the small office at the rear of the store where she eagerl listened to his confidences and plans.

"I knew something was wrong this morning at breakfast. Mrs Jones asked me where you were. I thought, of course, you were late getting up and then I discovered you had gone. Wha happened?"

Philip explained. Suddenly he felt small and meanly disloyal i criticizing Marjorie even to Mrs. G. He stumbled over the word with which he described his wife's desertion; the blood flooded hi cheeks hotly. But Mrs. Grotenberg's shocked expression and th amazed ejaculations with which she heard of his wife's performanc were eminently gratifying.

"Oh, my boy—my boy!" Mrs. Grotenberg exclaimed, holding hi big hand in both of hers. "They're not worthy of you! The don't begin to appreciate you,—your fineness and your splendi nature! That woman—that woman. . . . She's a holy terror! An Marjorie isn't good enough for you; she isn't worth your littl finger!"

Philip's face darkened.

"Margie's all right, Mrs. G.," he said evenly. "There's nothin the matter with Margie. She just needs a little coaxing . . ."

"Coaxing!" Mrs. Grotenberg sniffed. "What she needs is to b taken by her two shoulders and given a good shaking. You're fa too gentle with her, Phil. She's nothing but a spoilt child. Sh doesn't *begin* to understand you; she doesn't know the first thin about being a wife. What you need is a loving, tender woman wh can make you comfortable,—who can take care of you, spending he days planning that your evenings are agreeable and amusing. . . . The idea of your washing dishes in the kitchen,—a great, fine fell like you! It just makes me sick!"

Philip laughed good-naturedly. The dish-washing meant not ing to him; he had never objected to that in the least. But Mr

Grotenberg's fierce championship and sympathy appeased him.

"Well, then you think it's all right for me to insist on Marjorie iving somewheres else with me? You think I ought to stick out?"

Mrs. Grotenberg considered. He was rather puzzled by her ndecision. He felt that Constance would have vigorously agreed vith him.

"I don't think it will do any good, Phil," she said at length, haking her head doubtfully. "It's just 'beating the devil around he bush.' It's just putting things off. Why don't you just pack our bag and quit? I just hate to see a feller as fine as you go on he rocks,—broken all to pieces."

"I'm not going on any rocks—nor being broken all to pieces. 'm sure I'm right and I'm going straight ahead."

Disappointed, Philip left her. He had hoped for encouragement, but even though Mrs. Grotenberg had given him none, he till was satisfied he was right. There would be a scene, of course; Marjorie would cry, and Mrs. Jones would be furious and say a ot of reckless things, but after he and his wife were comfortably ettled under some other roof, they would both become persuaded he change had been for the better.

He was unprepared for Marjorie's unrepentant mood. She met is suggestion with polite surprise. In his eagerness for a change n their mode of living, he had forgotten there was still a serious ifference between them. He was staggered to find that she considered herself the one aggrieved.

"And you want me to go live with you in a cheap boarding ouse and leave Mama?" she inquired with affected sweetness.

"Y-e-s,—only it's not cheap, Margie. It's pretty and nicely urnished. We'd have a fine big room and there's a folding bed hat shuts up and gives us lots of space."

"When do you expect me to do all this?"

"Well, as soon as you could, Margie. . . . Right away, if you ill; I can't stand this kind of an arrangement any longer."

His wife raised her eyebrows in genuine surprise; her affected anner dropped from her, and she continued to gaze at him, but ow with parted red lips and angry frown.

"I never heard of anything so utterly ridiculous in my life!"

Philip was taken aback by the sudden change in her, but persisted, shaking his head doggedly.

"I want it very much, Marjorie. We can't go on this way and be happy. I won't live here any more, and you've got to go with me."

"I'll do nothing of the sort."

"But, Margie,—you've *got* to."

"Well—I *won't*."

"Margie,—I'm going, and you're going with me. I'm your husband, and where I go, you've got to go, too."

"I won't stir a step."

Philip studied her with a puzzled frown.

"I don't think you understand," he said. "I've decided to go."

Marjorie, her small body bristling with defiance, tossed her hair angrily.

"Well then—*go!*"

It took slow-thinking Philip a moment to grasp the fact that she intended them to separate. With the sickening realization of her meaning, something strong within him rose combatively and hardened his purpose. He made one more effort to persuade her, taking hold of her rebellious brown wrists.

"Margie—do you know what you're doing? Do you realize I'm going down those stairs and out of that door in a few minutes and that unless you go with me, that will be the end between us? It'll only be a memory, Margie darling,—nothing more!"

Her lip commenced to tremble and large silvery tears began to drop from her eyes. Philip, hoping he was making headway, eagerly pressed his plea, but at the end she only shook her head, struggling to free herself.

"Let go—let go my hands—let me go—leave me alone," she sobbed.

But Philip caught her to him, one vigorous arm about her shoulders, her breast close against his, and tilted the tear-stained face upwards, kissing the wet cheeks and mouth with passionate fierceness.

"Margie—Margie—I can't give you up! You *will* go with me. My darling—my dearest—my own girl,—you won't let me go without you?"

"Phil—Phil—let me go! Oh-h, *Phil!*"

The last was a wail of entreaty and it was followed close by a rough bony hand jerking at his sleeve. He turned and faced the fierce, angry features of his mother-in-law.

"Leave her alone! Take your hands off her! You brute,—you bully,—you big hoodlum!"

The woman thrust herself between them, pushing him roughly away, and gathering her weeping daughter in her arms. Philip relinquished his wife, distaste and resentment quenching his fierce yearning.

"You ought to be horsewhipped, you big coward,—abusing a little girl like this! . . . You're not fit to touch her! . . . Get out of this house and don't you dare put your foot inside here again!"

Philip, staring at his mother-in-law, thought how much he would enjoy taking this shrieking harpy by the throat and squeezing her leathery neck until she screamed for mercy. His malevolent glance spoke eloquently of his thoughts. Mrs. Jones suddenly shrank from him and checked her shrill outcry. He looked contemptuously at her frightened ugly face, and with deep hurt at the dark head clasped to her breast, then groped his way blindly from the room. He pulled his old battered valise out from under the bed in his room, shoved a few articles and clothing into it, and stumbled down the steep stairs, Marjorie's gasping sobs still in his ears. Outside a soft fog met him, wrapt itself close about him, and in a moment swallowed him from sight.

CHAPTER VI.

§ 1.

Wilbur Lansing welcomed him back as a room-mate and they breakfasted together again at a neighboring coffee parlor, and walked downtown in the bright mornings to their work, as if Marjorie and the wonderful honeymoon week, the months of happiness, and the little intimate secrets whispered together in dark nights, were but fancies of Philip's brain. But the hurt lay heavy against his heart and thoughts of her relentlessly pursued him; he missed her, wanted and needed her; he loved her with all the passion of soul and body.

The very next day after he had quitted the Jones' flat he sought Constance, and poured out to her his tale of woe across the moist table-cloth of a dingy little French restaurant where he took her to lunch. But Constance was not so sanguine over the possibility of a speedy reconciliation as he had hoped.

"Oh, Phil, I'm so sorry I went away," she said, distress thickening her voice. "Elsie begged so hard . . . I never should have gone. I could have straightened you all out. But now . . ." She shook her head. "I'll have to see Mama and see how things are. I'll run out there to-night."

She was not more reassuring when he again met her.

"Phil,—Mama's awfully sore at you. I don't know what you could have said. Did you threaten her or anything? Margie's in a nervous collapse. She cries all day and says she never wants to see you again, and Mama carries on something terrible. Oh, Phil —Phil, I don't see what's going to happen or how things will turn out. We'll have to wait,—give 'em both time. You know I'll do everything I can, but it wouldn't do any good for you to try and come back now."

Philip listened, his misery settling hopelessly upon him.

"I can never go back, Connie," he said dully. "She's got the

ome to me. We're going to start right next time and live alone. Her place is with me."

"But, Phil,—Mama'll never give her up!"

The matter rested unexpectedly there. He had relied confidently upon Constance bringing her sister and mother to their senses. But though she had failed and frankly told him she doubted that there ever would be a reconciliation as long as he persisted in his determination to separate his wife from her mother, it never occurred to him to recede from his position.

But if he missed Constance's sympathy, he found what comfort his days possessed for him in the affectionate solicitude of Mrs. Rotenberg. From the uncertainty of mind with which she had at first entertained his proposal to take Marjorie away with him, she had come to a hearty endorsement of the stand he had chosen. She counselled him earnestly not to weaken, and assured him he was doing the right thing.

"It's the only way, Phil dear, Margie'll ever learn to appreciate what a fine feller she's got. It's teaching her a good lesson."

She brought him detailed accounts of what went on from day to day in the Jones' flat, and he lived for these. He sought Mrs. Rotenberg's cleaning-and-dyeing shop two or three times a week, and eagerly drank in all she could tell him about his wife. He found her communications more interesting than those of Constance with whom he frequently lunched. Marjorie's sister could not refrain from coloring her accounts a little. At least so he suspected. She was forever dwelling on Marjorie's tears and her mother's outraged sensibilities. Philip eagerly wanted her to declare unreservedly her entire approval of his behavior, but she always evaded committing herself when he pressed her.

"What difference does it make who's right and who's wrong," he said. "We're all humans and none of us are perfect; no one is ever wholly right. I can't say you done absolutely the right thing in leaving your wife whatever happened. We all want the matter patched up and forgotten. You love Margie and I know she loves you. She misses you every day of her life, and it ain't going to be but a little while before you both're friends again."

But while Philip liked to hear that his wife loved him and missed him, he was not entirely satisfied that this was true, not when he

listened to Mrs. Grotenberg upon whose tongue there was no restraint and who told him, he felt, the real facts. Marjorie had gone to the matinée with Virginia Parsons, and had been to a dance in Golden Gate Hall with Virginia and Virginia's fat jolly beau, Jimmy Fisher, a rich coal man; the pimply young Cadwell had reappeared and had had the effrontery to call on Marjorie. The two of them had occupied the parlor on the occasion of his visit, and had kept Mrs. Grotenberg up until she had been obliged to walk into the room and inform them she wanted to go to bed.

Philip was not jealous; he had no fear of the pimply Cadwell, but it troubled him to think of Marjorie so blithely living her own life without him, seeking her round of pleasures, amusing herself in her old accustomed way without regret or thought of him. He made himself miserable with speculations concerning her. Did she ever lie awake, as he did, for long hours in the night, and feel the fierce yearning for him that was his for her? Did she pass the little restaurants where they had happily lunched and dined together on memorable occasions without experiencing the pang that caught at his heart? Could she ever think of their week at Del Monte, or of the moonlight nights of love-making up at the ranch, without knowing any of his anguish? Was his little brown-skinned wife a heartless creature to whom all the golden hours and perfect memories which they two alone had shared, meant nothing?

He struggled fiercely against these torturing doubts. Marjorie had her faults, Marjorie was human, he told himself, but he clung to his faith in her love for him. She loved him and missed him, he felt convinced she still considered him her husband and would always do so, no matter what happened. It was the malignant influence of her mother that prejudiced her against him, and day by day and night by night he told himself over and over that the time must come when their two loving hearts and hungry souls must surmount all obstacles and be reunited.

§ 2.

Christmas came and went. Philip sent Marjorie a small gold washed pin of two hearts pierced by a pearl-headed arrow

astened to the purple ribbon which bound a great bunch of vio-
ts, but there was no acknowledgment. He did not expect any;
was a relief to him that his little gift was not returned.

He spent the holiday with his family in Vacaville and it was
othing and pleasant to be at home again. His father was getting
owly better and beginning painfully to hobble about; Harry had
d his troubles as superintendent and three of the ranch's oldest
nployees had found other positions; Lucy was developing into a
eauty; his mother was just the same. After the heavy midday
hristmas dinner had been eaten, and the table cleared, Philip
rew his mother out to the circular seat about the mammoth trunk
f the giant fig, and told her of his rupture with his wife, but
e was eager to assure her that the estrangement was only tem-
orary; it would only last a few weeks until Marjorie came to
er senses.

Mrs. Baldwin listened gravely, critically. Her son respected
er judgment; he regarded her as the wisest person he knew.

"Husband and wife shouldn't ever live with either's folks,"
e commented soberly. "Relatives always make trouble; they're
ways siding against one or the other. I could have warned you
our living all together wouldn't do, but yours were deaf ears,
n."

He went back to the city and took up his single life with a
ogged determination to bide his time and wait for events to shape
emselves. He hoped Mulligan would give him a raise before
ng, and that then Marjorie might be willing to listen to a propo-
tion to keep house with him in a small flat, somewhere out in
e Western Addition. He was dismally lonesome. He had
ways enjoyed company, and the taste he had had of married life
ade any other existence unsatisfactory. He liked Lansing,
owever; intimacy made them closer friends, but his room-mate's
nusements did not interest him as they might have done in his
achelor days. Lansing enjoyed the *Orpheum* and *Zinkand's;* he
ked to "do the line" on Saturday afternoons along Kearny and
Iarket Streets, innocently ogling the girls; he liked to play the
rd machines for drink checks at the *Yellowstone* and the *Crystal*
alace. None of these particular pleasures Philip considered
cious, but they bored him. He preferred to spend his evenings

in his room and found solace in playing solitaire or reading the monthly magazines.

§ 3.

The weeks slipped by and spring rains were showering the city before he realized that winter was gone. A year ago he had been happily planning his marriage and counting the days to the wedding. A certain quiet gravity,—almost melancholy,—settled upon him. The ache in his heart persisted; he could not keep his thoughts away from his wife; the soft brown neck, the red lips the warm dark eyes and the lovely bobbed head haunted him. He had an old photograph of her,—a picture of a younger, and, to his thinking, a less lovely Marjorie,—which he carried about with him and often surreptitiously slipped from his pocket to study hungrily. At night he lay still in bed, stretched flat upon his back, staring up into the blackness, and let his mind carry him back to her, visioning again her lovely face with its provoking roguery, feeling again her slim caressing finger-tips, her young round arms, and soft yielding lips.

The unsatisfied longing, the nights and days of loneliness, his general unhappiness, began to show in his face and demeanor.

"You're getting so solemn, Phil, old boy," Mrs. Grotenberg remarked to him one day when they were having tea together in the back room of her shop. "You get looking more an' more gloomy! Why, you used to laugh out loud and gay-like, and I used just to love to hear you, but you don't even talk much now."

"I guess I'm growing like Ma," Philip said soberly. "She never says anything unless she's obliged to."

"But you didn't use to be that way?" Mrs. Grotenberg persisted.

"Well . . ." he sighed wistfully, "I didn't have so much to worry me."

His companion made a slight impatient sound with her lips. After a moment she asked:

"Does—does Marjorie still mean so much to you?"

Philip nodded with a wry twist of his mouth. Mrs. Grotenberg reached for his hand, and pressed it affectionately.

"Phil—why do you let yourself care? Why don't you try to

out her out of your mind? Dearest boy, she isn't worth your devotion. You keep on thinking about her and that's what keeps you caring. Phil,—you two will never come together again. Marjorie's forgotten you, she doesn't care the same way; she laughs and sings all day as though she hadn't a thing on her mind. Suppose Mrs. Jones should suddenly fall dead, do you think Margie'd come back to you? Believe me, Phil, I know women, and I know Margie, and I tell you she's done with you. Why keep on caring?. . . Phil,—did you ever think of being free again? Forget about Marjorie. You've got all your life before you. Look about you for a woman better suited to you, a woman who will make you happy, work for you and be a real pal, a true companion with whom you could build your life on a real foundation. Phil dear, I am pleading for your happiness,—happiness to which you're entitled. You have excellent grounds for legal proceedings. Marjorie's deserted you,—refused to live with you and in any divorce court that would be . . ."

"Good God, Mrs. G.!" Philip interrupted her. "What the devil! . . . You're not talking about *divorce?*"

"Most assuredly, that's just what I mean,—divorce!"

"Divorce Margie?"

"Yes,—certainly."

Philip felt inclined to laugh, but the earnest face of his counsellor checked him. The possibility of a legal separation from Marjorie had never crossed his mind and, since what he most desired was speedy reunion with her, the suggestion seemed ridicrous.

He was struck by the seriousness Mrs. Grotenberg displayed. The very idea of divorce was repugnant to him. People he considered decent did not get divorces. He had always looked rather askance at men and women who were divorced, and he said as much now to Mrs. Grotenberg, somewhat impatiently. Her face darkened, her fine eyes flooded suddenly, she dropped her head into her hands and with heaving shoulders began silently to cry. Too late, Philip remembered her history. He sucked in his breath sharply as he realized his blunder. Her distress stabbed him; clumsily he tried to comfort her, patting her awkwardly upon the shoulder, squeezing her arm, repeating over and over repentant words.

With a rush of passionate words and tears, Mrs. Grotenberg poured out a vindication of her position. It was a long story of abuse, neglect and drunkenness from which the law compassionately had delivered her. And now the best part of her life was over, her girlhood and beauty were gone, even her old home had vanished. Poverty and want had followed, but alone and friendless she had won a place for herself by perseverance and hard work. Nobody knew what she had suffered; she was alone, no one loved her; she was friendless, no one cared; she was a discard, a *divorcée.*

Philip could not recall afterwards just how it happened but presently she was in his arms, and hers were about his neck, and he was kissing her tenderly. Riding home on the cable-car half-an-hour later, he marvelled at her sad story. She had been pursued by misfortune, trailed by adversity, hounded by disaster. And she had been so fine and splendid through it all, he thought. He had never once heard her complain; not so much as a whisper of her own troubles had crossed her lips during all the months he had gone to her and talked of nothing but his own. He had been a blundering fool, as usual; he felt tremendously sorry for her.

When next he saw her, she told him more of her unhappy marriage, relating some of its dreadful circumstances. He kissed her affectionately when they met; he considered she had been a loyal, good friend to him and he felt drawn more closely to her each time he saw her; she had stood staunchly by him through his own unhappy hour, and he was eager to show her an equal amount of friendship and sympathy.

They dined together downtown occasionally after this, and gradually it became an understood thing that Sunday night was a standing engagement between them. Philip found himself looking forward to these companionable little dinners with much pleasure; he liked Mrs. G.'s company, he liked to listen to tales of the Jones' comings and goings, he liked to talk of Marjorie. He was distressed and irritated, however, by the constant suggestion of divorce that crept up in Mrs. G.'s conversation. He told her with considerable impatience, finally, that under no circumstances would he consider it, and that even if Marjorie instituted proceedings, he would contest them.

It was on the way home after one of their pleasant Sunday
ibles-d'hôte together, that he made this bluntly plain to Mrs.
rotenberg. On these nights he usually accompanied her part of
ie way back to the Jones' flat, leaving the Valencia Street car
t Mission Street and taking the electric crosstown car in the
irection of his own residence. On this occasion Mrs. Grotenberg
ecided that she too would get off at this junction. She must check
p her cash book, she declared, for the district manager would be
ound the next day on his fortnightly visit. They walked up the
reet to her office together, and Philip opened the heavy glass
out door with the key she gave him. He felt entirely at
ome in her small place of business where he had spent many
pleasant hour, smoking, talking and listening to the singing
ettle. He switched on the lights in the little back-room, and
as rolling himself one of his brown paper cigarettes when Mrs.
rotenberg came and stood close to him, her cheek against his arm.
resently she faced him and placed both her hands upon his
oulders, looking up into his face.

"Kiss me, Philip," she said simply.

He leaned across the half rolled cigarette in his fingers and
uched her lips lightly. But this did not satisfy her; she slipped
er hands behind his neck, drew his head down to her, and kissed
m hotly on the mouth. Philip was surprised, startled. Mechani-
lly he returned the pressure of her lips, hardly aware of what
did.

"Ah, Philip—my dearest,—my darling,—I love you so."

She poured out her avowal, tenderly, entreatingly. Shocked
id embarrassed, he caught her wrists, loosened her hands from
out his neck, and slowly pushed her from him.

"Phil—Phil—don't turn away. I—I've borne too much; I've
ffered too long. I've loved you ever since I saw you,—that
st time you came out to the house. I watched you day after
y giving your splendid love and devotion to a little undeveloped
·l who was only selfish,—incapable of appreciating you. Phil—
ı only thirty-four,—I'm young still,—I've studied you and I
ı make you happy. Oh—oh, you don't *know* what love means!
ve like mine! . . . You say you do—but you can't—you *can't!*
. But, Phil—if you can't give me the love I crave, don't turn

against me,—give me your friendship, your comradeship. Ac what you will of me—I am yours—yours to love or despise—wha you will . . ."

The eager words continued. She clung to his arm, her hea pressed against his breast, the tears wetting her cheeks. Phili was overwhelmed with embarrassment, seized with confusion; b was filled with mighty pity for her; sympathy and revulsion con tended in his heart; he was acutely ashamed both for himself an her. His helplessness and distress would have been apparent t her had she seen his face. Over and over he kept repeating clumsy remonstrance:

"Ah, don't, Mrs. G.—don't, Mrs. G.—no—no, Mrs. G."

Thoughts of Marjorie, his black-haired roguish little wif rushed upon him. A sense of guilt, of being unfaithful to he came to him. He wanted to push this temptress from him and f from the room, taking himself as far as possible from her and he blandishments. Mixed up with this repugnance, there surged i him a poignant pity for the bared soul clinging imploringly t his feet.

After a time the tumultuous confession and entreaty cease Philip stood stiffly, his arms folded, his glance roving about th room, resting anywhere except upon the woman before him. H did not trust himself to speak, fearful lest any word of kindne might be misinterpreted. He composed himself to wait until th painful situation solved itself. Presently Mrs. Grotenberg becam more composed, her voice lower-keyed, though now it was moc caressing and cajoling. He listened, gritting his teeth, digging hi nails into the palms of his shut fists. The moment came when could endure his discomfort no longer; roughly he freed himse and reached for his hat. What he said he phrased clumsi brutally; he had no subtlety, no niceties of expression.

"I'm sorry, Mrs. G.—I'm awfully sorry. I'll always be tr to Margie. She's my wife, whether she loves me or not."

Mrs. Grotenberg sank upon her knees and abjectly dropped h forehead upon the clasp of her knotted fingers. Philip saw opportunity then, and strode past her to the door.

§ 4.

His experience with Mrs. Grotenberg disturbed him a great eal. He was disappointed, shocked, sickened. He felt he had lost friend, a friend he loved, a sympathetic heart on which he had rustingly relied. The woman's weakness stirred him deeply. Ie felt tremendously sorry for her, but at the same time he shrank rom thoughts of her as from something evil. His simple country obringing, his mother's influence, had made him a Puritan. Mrs. rotenberg seemed bad to him, and yet she was not lacking in ppeal. It was this that disturbed him. He was still in love with is wife; Marjorie was all that was beautiful, good and sweet. Ie wanted her desperately, with burning desire. Mrs. Grotenerg's avowed passion sent him scurrying from her side; he was thoroughly alarmed as the convent-bred girl at an ogling wink rom a leering seducer.

Mrs. Grotenberg did not let him escape without further efforts ensnare him. Twice, at the office, he received notes from her. o her first urgent request to see him for a moment, he replied e considered it wiser for them not to meet; her second importuty, he ignored. And then for a long while he heard nothing rther from her.

§ 5.

Wilbur Lansing spent his two weeks' summer vacation with hilip in Vacaville. It was a happy time for everyone at the nch. Lansing always talked easily and amusingly, and Philip's mily decided they liked him thoroughly. He would get them all to a state of uproarious laughter with his quick, witty coments, and Philip heard his mother's mild chuckle more frequently an he ever before remembered. Lucy frankly adored him and e Judge, who both addressed him and referred to him as "fidus hates," admitted to Philip with an impressive clearing of his roat that his friend was "a young man of parts."

Philip's mother broached to him at this time the possibility his remaining at home. Labor was scarce and his hands were

badly needed. But Philip could not bring himself to leave the city. He considered his place was near Marjorie where, when the day of reconciliation came—as he fiercely believed it inevitably must,—he would be ready, waiting for her.

On the eve of his return his mother called him to her room and put into his hands three Government bonds of a thousand dollars each.

"It's my father's life insurance, Philip. I bought these bonds nearly twenty-five years ago; they were always intended for you. You may need them now;—a little money means a good deal to a young man starting out sometimes,—more than ten times as much later on. I thought perhaps if Marjorie should one day want to come back, you might use some of this money to furnish up a little house for her . . ."

Philip caught his mother to him and kissed her roughly. A mist came into his eyes. Marjorie had left in him an aching desolation and he responded instantly to the barest evidence of affection. His mother had always understood, had always seen inside him, and had known, without provoking questions, how much he suffered. There were no further words between them; he held her slight figure away from him, his great hands encircling her thin flail-like arms, and gazed a long moment into her calm, gray eyes. Then he kissed her again, gently this time,—a tender lingering touch upon the smooth silvery hair.

San Francisco seemed to spell hope to him when he and Wilbur returned to the city the end of August. The first day he was free he hurried to see Constance. Her radiant face and glowing manner of greeting made his heart stand still with the wild thought his hope had been justified. But it was her own happiness of which she was full. She pushed his arm gaily with one of her characteristic jogging taps, as she told him she was going to be married,—married to Elsie's brother, Stanley Trevor, who was a teller in the Market Street Bank! But her glad tidings brought to her brother-in-law only the recollection of days whose promise had meant something similar to him, and a shadow crossed his face.

"Oh, I'm sorry, Philip,—it's stupid of me! I'm so happy myself, I forgot you weren't; forgive me."

"I'm awfully glad, Connie,—of course. I only hope he is half good enough for you. . . . When's the wedding?"

"Three—six—ten months! Nothing settled. . . . Perhaps in the spring."

"And Margie? How's she getting along?"

"Phil—just the same as ever! She ain't changed a bit toward you. She listens and listens when I talk about you,—and she's always as happy as a bird if I tell her I've seen you and you've asked about her. I tell you I know my sister, and I know she loves you and wants you just like you love and want her. The trouble is, Margie's stubborn, and she won't admit nothing, and Mama breaks her neck to give her a good time. She's got Margie down to Santa Cruz now; they went away a week ago and I don't know how long they expect to stay. The flat's shut up. I'm over the bay with Elsie, and Mrs. G.'s rooming on Mission."

Philip drank in these details, but they were far from satisfying. It made him uneasy to think of Marjorie at a gay summer resort meeting other men, amused by distractions which were bound to help her forget him.

"Does she—does she use my name?" he asked shyly.

"Oh *yes*," Constance assured him, "it's always 'Mrs. Baldwin,'—'Mrs. Philip Baldwin,'—she's very proud of it."

Philip grinned happily, sheepishly.

"Does she, really?"

"Why,—*sure*."

"Really and truly?"

"Of course! It ain't never anything else."

She was still his wife before the world,—she still considered herself "Mrs. Baldwin," thought Philip with satisfaction. She must—she *must* think sometimes of coming back to him; she couldn't go on living away from him forever!

Some weeks later came his belated raise in salary. Bert Cadogan was sent up to fill a vacancy in the Seattle branch, and Philip was promoted to his place. How much a hundred dollars a month would have meant to him a year ago when he needed it so badly! He and Marjorie could have managed a home of their own on so magnificent an income, and she might have listened t;

his suggestion that they start housekeeping, when the plea for a boarding-house had sounded unattractive. He was thinking of this with a sorry ache as he crossed lower Post Street on a gusty afternoon, when suddenly he saw her. He had no more than a glimpse of her slight boyish figure as she turned into the entrance of the *Mechanics' Library,* but it sent his heart knocking against his throat and for an instant paralyzed his muscles. He stood stock-still in the middle of the street gazing at the doorway through which she had disappeared, and narrowly escaped being run over by a rattling delivery team. He reached the sidewalk and, hardly conscious what he did, slowly walked toward the library, past its entrance, trembling hope and deadly fear contending within him that she would emerge from the building at that very moment and meet him face to face.

But there was no encounter and hope died miserably, while fear gave place to relief. Beyond the library, some fifty feet or more, was a florist's shop whose wide window gave an excellent reflection of the street. Philip paused in front of it and assumed a preoccupied inspection of the flowers, while his heart still thundered in his breast, as he studied in the mirror before him the faces of the passers-by. At the moment an inspiration came to him. He stepped hastily inside the store and pointed to the first flowers he saw. The dilatory clerk, fussing with ferns and tissue paper, exasperated him with his leisureliness, but presently he was back at his post with the be-tissued bundle held carefully out of sight between his big frame and the window. He had no definite plan. It occurred to him, fantastically, to drop the flowers at her feet as she approached, and then dash madly away. The blood was still pounding in his arteries, and his muscles were tensed against a nervous trembling of the knees. When finally she appeared, walking slowly, unconcernedly toward him, she was looking idly at the street, her library book neatly tucked beneath her arm. He turned as she approached, but she did not see him, and would have passed, had he not found voice enough to utter her name. He stood hat and flowers in hand, his eyes, his face, his whole loose-jointed figure glowing with timid eagerness and hope. He saw the shock that staggered her as she met his eyes, the quick warm color that flooded her brown cheeks.

"Marjorie—Marjorie—dearest——"

Hurrying men engaged upon their affairs, sauntering women isurely shopping, the turmoil of the cobbled street, swept past heeding of the man and woman who stood with throbbing hearts side the florist's window gazing into one another's eyes. There the flower shop on crowded Post Street in the pale afternoon nshine and flying dust, the destiny of two souls was being iftly determined, the happiness of a man and wife hung in e balance.

Philip held out his flowers clumsily toward her, but at his ovement Marjorie dropped her eyes; she stood irresolutely a oment without speaking,—then turned away. But he was stantly beside her. All his fierce love for her swept over him: e was his girl,—his wife,—his chum. She belonged to him, and w he was going to claim her. He would fight,—physically if ed be,—but he had suffered enough; he had borne an intolerable uation too long; he wanted her, and was determined she should me back to him.

They walked up the street silently, side by side. Marjorie held r head down, so that Philip could not see her face, but happiness rged up within him. It was wonderful just to be with her again, st to be at her side, walking along together, touching her elbow casionally at the crossings, brushing her shoulder in the jostling owd. The blocks succeeded one another unnoticed, and after a ne they left stores and shops behind, and found themselves in a sidential district. Philip looked at the empty flats they were ssing, and gazed at the "To Let" signs pasted in front windows, d his heart grew big with a sturdy resolve.

"Margie,—I can't live without you any longer," he burst out ldenly. "My heart's breaking and I can't—I can't stand it! ove you, I'll always love you, and every day of my life I love u more. I want you,—you're my wife,—and—and we belong to h other!"

His voice shook with his emotion, but he kept on. He pleaded cause with clumsy eloquence, and presently observed her nds were shaking. They were passing a candy shop and he ldenly caught her by the arm and drew her into the little con- tioner's, guiding her to one of the small round tables in the

farthest corner. Over their ice-cream sodas, with awkward phra and halting words, he drove his argument of love and entreaty its triumphant finish. A tear trickled down the brown cheek loved so dearly; eagerly he covered the little hand beside him.

"Margie—Margie—I love you—love you. . . . Don't you lo me?"

The red lips trembled and with the words, the voice that h haunted his dreams, the voice he had waited all the long wea months to hear once more, the voice that for him held all the mus and beauty in the world, broke piteously.

"I've—I've always loved you—Phil—I've never stopped lovi you—a minute!"

A rush of tears came then; the pent-up struggle in her hea gave way, and in that quiet corner of the deserted little can shop, their happiness came flooding back to them, richer, deep and more wonderfully glorious for the very barrier that h stemmed its tide.

§ 6.

They lived over again the excitement, the wonderful joy their first days of love-making, but now it was a thousand tim more thrilling, a thousand times more poignant. Their love flam like fire. They drank deep of an ecstasy that whipped their pul to a mad gallop. Secret telephonings and secret meetings le flavor and magic glamor to their love; they managed to see o another every day and often lunched together; once they ev contrived to stay out all night together, Mrs. Jones being persuad her daughter was with Virginia Parsons. They slept downtown one of the big hotels and in the morning had breakfast in th room.

"Phil—just suppose we weren't married at all—and could be married—wouldn't loving each other this way be perfec terrible?"

He was full of plans for a home, and one day coaxed her visit with him a flat he had already inspected where the rent w but twenty-five dollars a month. It was situated out on Califor Street near Broderick,—an excellent neighborhood. It was

lower suite of rooms in a new building of flats, and had curved glass panes in curved bay windows, colored leaded panels of glass in the front door, and a fancy figured tiled fireplace in the parlor that delighted Marjorie's heart. Then there was the furniture to select. Philip sold his bonds, put the money in the bank and proceeded to spend all but five hundred dollars of it. The oak furniture—Mission style—the warm thick rugs, dainty china, the linen, towels and pictures they inspected enchanted his little wife. He encouraged her to buy whatever she fancied; her childish delight, her affection, her wild gaiety more than satisfied him.

"Mama suspects something, Phil," she said with a troubled air one day when she met him. "She questioned me terribly about where I was yesterday, and she wanted to come along to-day. I don't know what I'm going to do!"

They decided to admit Constance to their secret and obtain her advice. The sister's extravagant joy when they walked in upon her at the store attracted the attention of several people in the aisle. Connie insisted at once upon going out to lunch with them, and they were seated in the restaurant but a few moments when they were joined by Stanley Trevor, to whom Constance had telephoned. Philip had not met his prospective brother-in-law before, and he greeted him now warmly.

Constance's future husband was a lantern-jawed young man, with lean cheeks, thin lips, a sharp-pointed nose and a beetling brow. He had quick nervous blue eyes which had a way of focussing themselves with penetrating intentness. He had a reserved manner, a judicial air, and had a trick of nodding encouragingly at whoever addressed him, pursing his lips the while, considering what was being said with affected gravity. Philip was prepared to like him; there was every reason that Constance's husband should be one of his intimate friends. But in spite of this predisposition to friendliness, in spite of Stanley Trevor's interesting and likable face, Philip was conscious of vague disappointment. There was a stand-offishness about him, an air of let's-not-be-too-impulsive-about-being-too-intimate that halted Philip in his brotherly overtures. Trevor, he decided, was shrewd to the point of being calculating.

They were all interested in deciding how best to approach

Marjorie's mother, to reconcile her to their plans. Philip was for running away with his wife to Del Monte for a Saturday and Sunday, leaving Constance to break the news to her mother as best she could. Marjorie proposed that she pretend to be sick,—she was confident she could dissemble sufficiently to alarm her mother,—and when Mrs. Jones' anxiety was sufficiently aroused, insist on her sending for Philip so that a reconciliation would be inevitable. Constance's earnest advice, however, that the two sisters face their mother together and win her consent and approval fairly and honestly, finally prevailed.

"You and Phil don't understand Mama," Constance said to her sister. "You have some crazy idea she'll be furious and raise the dickens, but I tell you she'll be perfectly all right about it. Mama ain't so unreasonable and the thing she wants above everythin' else is for Margie, here, to be happy, and if we can once convince her Margie really and truly wants to go back to Phil, she'll come 'round and won't make any fuss at all."

Constance's faith in her mother's tractability was entirely justified. Mrs. Jones cried generously and kissed both daughters at frequent intervals, but in the end was prevailed upon to admit that perhaps it was wiser for Marjorie to return to her husband.

"I don't know what's to become of me when you're both married and 've got homes of your own," wailed Mrs. Jones in fresh grief. "You'll have no use for your poor old mother—either of you!"

"Well for Heaven's sake, Mama!" Constance exclaimed. "Why don't you go on to Saint Louis and see your sister? You've been saying—for I don't know how many years,—how you'd like to go and see Aunt Abby, but that you never could on *our* account!"

"Well, Connie——," Mrs. Jones wiped her long nose and sniffed reflectively, "I don't know but what that's a good idea; I haven't seen Abby or Frederick in sixteen years!"

§ 7.

Of all their happy times together, Philip and his wife knew none so perfect in felicity as those spent furnishing their new home. Marjorie had never had so much money in her life, and

she was intoxicated with the pleasure and power it gave her. The furniture stores were ransacked: mahogany for the parlor, mission oak for the dining-room, bird's-eye maple for the bedroom. They haunted the auctions of Turkish rugs, and had great joy in bidding for those they fancied. They acquired, as great bargains, such woven treasures as were assured by the auctioneer to be genuine Khivas, Kazaks or rare specimens from Beloochistan and Cabristan. They liked to roll these mouth-filling names under their tongues. They bought silver, china, bed and table linen, and Philip enjoyed most of all selecting some standard sets of books for the mahogany bookcase in the parlor: Kipling, Stevenson, and a 'slightly rubbed' set of the Encyclopædia Britannica, considerably reduced in price. Mrs. Jones offered to let them have her piano; Marjorie was the only one who ever touched it, and its presence in the old home, her mother declared, would only serve to remind her of her loneliness.

By the end of October everything was complete and Marjorie was as childishly happy as a little girl with her first doll-house. A little after three in the afternoons, a school-boy Jap came in, and for ten dollars a month did dish-washing and heavy cleaning. Nothing seemed lacking, and Philip and Marjorie settled down to comfortable married life in what they both considered a perfect home. Marjorie experimented a good deal in the kitchen, although she knew little about cooking, but she learned from her sister and mother how to make simple things, and Philip thought proudly that he managed astonishingly well. Mrs. Jones, Constance, Stanley Trevor and Wilbur Lansing took Thanksgiving dinner with them and everyone was full of praise and congratulations, although the cranberry sauce was burnt, and the turkey, much too large for its platter, slipped from Philip's fork-hold on to the floor.

During Christmas week, Constance was married. She and her husband planned for a time to live in Berkeley with Stanley's mother and sister. Stanley owned a lot in Piedmont and in the spring they would begin building.

Conspicuously absent from Constance's wedding was the figure of Mrs. Grotenberg. There had been an inevitable meeting between herself and Philip on the first evening he took dinner with the Jones family after his reconciliation with his wife. He was more than ready to be friends with her again, anxious she should realize

the unpleasant memory they shared, as far as he was concerned, was practically forgotten. He shook her hand with a warm pressure, as he told her how glad he was to see her again. But though she greeted him, before the others, with her old accustomed friendliness, she was nevertheless constrained. During dinner she was subdued, and immediately afterwards put on her hat and went out. He thought she was looking badly, not ill exactly, but tired and run down.

A few weeks later,—a short time after the young Baldwins were happily established in their new home,—Marjorie's mother came to see her daughter, greatly agitated over what she asserted was Mrs. Grotenberg's outrageous ingratitude. She poured a long recital of her grievances into her daughter's ears, and Philip heard the garbled tale from Marjorie when he came home in the evening. It was an ugly story, absurdly involved, in which Mrs. Grotenberg was represented as a crafty, scheming, dishonest creature, who had basely deceived her benefactor, and had actually defrauded her out of a sum of money.

Philip was loath to believe it. He often wondered about Mrs. Grotenberg. It was apparent to him now that she had tried to make him break with Marjorie for good. She had given him distorted accounts, leading him to think she had ceased to care about him. He could not make up his mind how much had been calculated mischief, how much prompted by her unhappy love. Now he was hearing from his wife's own lips how lonely she had been without him, how she had missed him, and how she had been tormented by casual remarks from Mrs. Grotenberg about himself. In spite of these evidences of duplicity, Philip told himself he had the memory of some wonderfully happy hours in the company of this woman,—hours untrammeled by any unworthy motive,—hours when she had cheered and comforted him,—hours when their intimacy had been as fine and as worthy as any relationship he had ever known.

CHAPTER VII.

§ 1.

In the spring of the following year the Spanish war broke out d Wilbur Lansing enlisted in one of the volunteer organizations r service in the Philippines. For several weeks he was encamped the Presidio, where Philip and Marjorie frequently visited him the evenings, and strolled among the rows of tents with the wds from the city. Philip would dearly have liked to go with friend when he sailed in June, but he was tied at home by his fe and the prospect of a baby in a few months.

Marjorie had rebelled against the complication of a child from e very first, and Philip had been sorry, too, for he had no par- ular desire for a family, and it was hard to watch Marjorie's tress when she began to suffer from nausea and helplessness, d to listen to her stormy complaints and tears. Mrs. Jones rried home from St. Louis, when she heard the news, and her tated concern over her daughter's condition filled them both h nervous apprehension. She had counselled Marjorie against therhood even before her marriage, picturing its discomfort in h awful terms that Philip and his wife had decided there must no children. Philip, in a vague sort of way, would have liked a ghter like his little sister, Lucy, but he felt that the matter of ldren could wait for a few years. He was not ready to assume responsibility of parenthood himself, and was far from desiring rjorie to run the risks of childbirth. Constance was the only e who was pleased; she was as excitedly delighted as if the ning baby were to be her own.

Philip had no alternative but to accept Mrs. Jones back into his ne. Their attitude toward one another since his reunion with his e had been in the nature of a truce. Occasionally he detected an concealed expression of impatience on his mother-in-law's face; he often coldly stared at her, when she volunteered advice, or

commented on what he considered did not concern her. With he daughter's need, Mrs. Jones threw self-restraint to the winds, an flew to Marjorie's side, assuming entire charge of her and of he affairs. Philip had to submit; he could not deny that, with hi mother-in-law presiding in the kitchen, watching out continuall for her daughter's comfort, and helping a little now and the financially, Marjorie's long weary months of waiting in bodil misery were materially ameliorated. He did not relish it; he di liked Mrs. Jones cordially, and felt her jealousy and disapprova but he saw only too clearly what she was able to do for him and h wife, and forced himself to be agreeably submissive to her dict torial ways.

The baby was born on one of the hottest of summer days wh the unusual heat was head-lined in the newspapers and formed th general topic of conversation in the street. Marjorie had a lon and dangerous period of travail, while her husband restless paced the floor of the little parlor they both had had such fun furnishing. His mother-in-law, the nurse, the doctor and th specialist who had been summoned, worked and sweated beside th bed of life or death whereon Marjorie lay, benumbed into mercif unconsciousness by the ether cone above her nose and lips. Dav came and the sun brought its burden of heat, but the struggle co tinued through endless stifling hours. Not until three o'clock the still, oppressive afternoon did the gray-haired maternity nur tell Philip the fight was over and he had a son.

A wan, pitiful little Marjorie smiled faintly up at him from h flat pillow. He had hoped to take her in his arms, to tell her his love, and his pride in her gallant struggle, but at the fir glimpse he saw she was past caring what he thought; she w indifferent to everything but the blessed respite from pain whi at last was hers. He was interested and curious about his so He had not thought much about the baby; but the fact that he w now a father touched his vanity. He foresaw enjoyment in telli the fellows down at the office about it. But when the nurse brou him the child his enthusiasm was somewhat chilled. The little fa was a weazened comic replica of Marjorie's mother; the child had th same close-set eyes, the same elongated, knobular nose; he was Jones. The only baby Philip had ever known had been his sist

ıcy, and he imagined in a dim sort of way that all babies were t and jolly with blue eyes and flaxen hair. He did not realize s disappointment until Constance laughingly accused him of it, she dandled the child in her arms.

"Every father wants his son to look like himself; it's fun-da-en-tal!" His sister-in-law emphasized her aphorism by gentle reaks of the little button end of the baby's nose. Philip refused admit the truth of her accusation but later he had to confess it as so.

During the nights while the baby's feeding caused much con-rn, Mrs. Jones caught cold. Marjorie had been unable to nurse r infant, and they had been obliged to put the child at once on e bottle, but it was a difficult undertaking. Mrs. Jones would be a dozen times in the night, fussing with saucepans, warming ilk formulas, holding the bundled baby in a long bony arm at dless intervals while she urged the rubber nipple into the rebel-ous fretting mouth. She battled against the sharp congestion in r lungs for several days before she gave in. Philip found her in e kitchen one evening when he came home from work, holding r head in her hands, breathing with difficulty. One glance at r face revealed the angry flush of fever. Philip got her to bed, d Constance arrived an hour later, at the moment the doctor as trying to persuade her mother to allow herself to be removed a hospital. Their combined urging finally prevailed, but two ys later she began rapidly to fail. Philip reached the hospital the middle of a glittering October morning in time to stand by s sobbing sister-in-law's side, as the fluttering breath grew inter and fainter, and presently fluttered out.

§ 2.

Marjorie was a long time getting back her strength. Constance k the baby away to her own home after Mrs. Jones' death, and ilip hired a cadaverous gaunt Irish girl to cook and look after wife. As day after day Marjorie lay apathetically in bed, ifferent to what went on about her, Philip was sometimes ght by the dreadful fear that her sprightliness, her roguishness,

the young gaiety that had been so delightfully characteristic, were gone forever. She had no interest in the baby, and as little in her husband or her home. The fresh beauty which had been so serene and girlish took on a pinched look and hard lines appeared about her mouth. Eventually her lagging strength began to return. Christmas found her planning to spend a fortnight or a month with Constance in the newly built bungalow in Piedmont where the Trevors were now established. The baby, whom Marjorie called Paul after her mother, Pauline, was flourishing under his aunt's care, but even the infatuated Constance could not claim that his looks had improved along with his health. Marjorie showed a dawning interest in the baby when she held him for the first time in her arms, but she clearly indicated no intention of disputing her sister's monopoly of the child, and was indifferent and even slightly amused by the passionate devotion Constance evinced.

During Marjorie's stay in Piedmont, Philip paid Vacaville a Sunday visit. He had not been home for nearly two years, and was anxious to see his family again, particularly as his brother Harry, and Rosemary Church had just been married. A few weeks before the birth of Philip's baby, Harry had come down to San Francisco to get some new clothes for his wedding. His brother had seen him on two or three occasions at this time, but he had not been able to be present at the wedding itself, a month later, on account of the imminence of his son's arrival. Joe Church, Rosemary's father, had fallen out of his hay loft and died a few days later as the result of a fractured skull. His wife's death had preceded his by a few months. It had seemed advisable to hasten Harry's and Rosemary's wedding after this, and now Harry was settled at the Church ranch, eagerly inaugurating all the new ideas in cultivation and harvesting to which his late father-in-law had been stubbornly opposed.

Philip spent an hour or two with his brother and wife on Sunday afternoon. They seemed to him ideally suited to one another. They were tasting the first delights of wedded happiness, and were interested in nothing and nobody but themselves. An idle speculation as to what his own life would have been had he married Rosemary amused Philip as he drove the old surrey homeward. Harry's destiny clearly lay ahead of him: he and his wife would

re comfortably on their little ranch; Harry would develop its ossibilities and would make it pay to good advantage; there would e children who would grow up healthy and strong in sunny easant Valley, go to the village school, marry and scatter about e community. Harry would always be one of the respectable, spected citizens of Vacaville, a member of the School Board and epublican Club, a well-known figure in the village society as his ather was before him. And that, too, might have been Philip's ate, had he never met the bare-legged, bobbed-haired, roguish tle figure washing her clothes down by the willows. He mused on the trivialities that shape the destiny of human lives. If he d not met Marjorie, he knew he would have gone back to Rose-ary the day after he had kissed her, and would have asked her marry him. Marjorie,—with her brown throat and red lips, fiantly glaring at him from her scrubbing,—had caught his eye, nd from that moment she had had all his love. It was hard to ink of her as the same Marjorie he knew so well,—the same rl,—now wife and mother,—who had smiled so faintly up at him om above the evenly spread sheet that covered her that stifling fternoon the baby had been born! He might have married Rose-ary and it was possible he might have been as happy with her he was with Marjorie; but even supposing the married part of s life had been the same, he was better satisfied with the pros-ects the city held for him; the future contained bigger possibili-es, richer and more vital than any that seemed to lie in store for arry on his tidy fruit ranch.

The early indications of unusual beauty he had observed in ucy on his last visit were now being richly confirmed. His small ster had passed her fifteenth birthday and was begging hard to allowed to put up her hair and lengthen her skirts. Her bright ory of soft spun golden hair, her eager blue eyes, her delicate se-tinted coloring were a rare combination in any girl. She ggested to Philip a sun-ripened peach that had been allowed to ng upon its branch until it had reached the full splendor of rfect maturity. She had been born in the shadow of the fruit, d been nurtured in the same soft air and mellow sunshine, and d captured some of the same luscious, delicate bloom.

On the train, going back to the city, he found himself specu-

lating about his sister. With such beauty, it was inevitable sh would marry young; in two or three years she would be confidin her heart to some callow local swain, and surrendering her bloo for the rest of her days to the merciless rays of the sun in Pleas ant Valley. She would become burnt and freckled, spending he life where she was born, watching the seasons' crops follow on another endlessly, living and dying a rancher's wife. It was onl fair that Lucy should have her chance, and it occurred to him a excellent idea would be for his mother to send her down to th city for a visit to him and Marjorie. It would be an easy matter t arrange for her to meet a different type of young man from th country boys she had learned to know in the Vacaville High Scho whose highest form of relaxation was hanging round Tom Schnei der's pool-rooms and playing the money-in-the-slot machines i Ray Bennett's Café. He smiled as he thought of how popula would be her unusual beauty, her gaiety, her volubility among th nicest of his associates at the office and a few of his old colleg acquaintances. He was enthusiastic about the plan, but when h broached it to Marjorie, she was coldly indifferent, and he remem bered with a sigh the old antipathy between his sister and his wif

§ 3.

Marjorie brought the baby back with her from Piedmont whe she returned to the city in February. The child had steadil gained under the care of Constance, but he still lacked the ros plumpness his father had always thought was the natural heritag of babies. His food was a constant problem and again and agai his diet had to be modified. He cried a great deal, and there w never a night when either one of his parents did not have to g up to quiet him. It came to be Philip's lot to attend to his sma son during the dark hours, for Marjorie complained that she h the child all day, and she thought it only fair that the fath should take him at night. Philip good-naturedly agreed; he d not mind being awakened from sleep, but he did not relish bei separated from his wife. The arrangement necessitated his sharin with his small son another room so that the sudden wails and ear

orning fretting might not disturb her. Marjorie did not take ndly to the cares of motherhood; she did not know how to meet em and they made her impatient. She was happiest when play- g with the baby, tumbling him about on the bed, or dressing him in a beribboned cap and starched piqué coat for a jaunt in the by carriage, when she took him to market or wheeled him over call on Virginia Parsons,—now Mrs. Jimmy Fisher. Virginia d married her coal dealer and lived in a fine house surrounded a terraced garden on Pacific Avenue, the best residential street the city. Marjorie resented routine. It made her irritable to alize suddenly that little Paul's feeding was thirty minutes erdue, that his nap-time was still an hour ahead, or that it was st the time for his bath. She intensely disliked "duties," pre- rring to do things impulsively or when it suited her. It was the ne with her housekeeping; she was utterly indifferent to hours r meals, despised the daily necessity of going to market unless me unusual purchase gave it novelty, and found the need of plan- ng her menus economically from day to day particularly bother- me.

"Margie,—what do you suppose makes the inside of this kid's s all red and angry? Do you think he's got a rash or some- ng?"

"Good gracious, Phil!—what's the matter *now?*" Marjorie uld exclaim, anxious irritation in her voice. "You're always ding something wrong with that child! . . . What is it? . . . Oh *t!* . . . I don't think that's anything but just rubbing; he afes a good deal."

"Did he get a bath this morning?"

"No—I forgot it to-day . . . I didn't have time."

"And yesterday you were out all day, and on Sunday we went ly to Piedmont. When *did* he have a bath?"

"Oh, you make me *tired,* Phil. You're always rowing! . . . e Paul to me,—I'll give him a bath right now."

"Wait till after dinner, Margie, and I'll do it for you."

He would know beforehand his wife would not consider this. rjorie rebelled at the slightest criticism and would retaliate this instance by making dinner an hour late.

Philip began dimly to perceive that motherhood had worked

a change in Marjorie. He felt obliged to attribute the differen in her to the fact of maternity. Her roguishness, the quality th had led him sometimes to call her "kitten," seemed to have fo saken her; the cunning mannerisms, and playfulness, the char which had been inherently bound up with her girlishness seem to have deserted her. He wondered how much of this was on his imagination caused by the altered way in which she wore h hair. She insisted that now, since she was a mother with a chil it was no longer proper for her to let it hang about her ears in wav profusion, and she proceeded to pin its short lengths into a sm mass at the back of her head which metamorphosed her appearan and added ten years to her age. She was no longer the sauc defiant little girl he had been so proud to capture, but a trim corseted, well-dressed young woman with the cares of a sm family upon her shoulders. Further reflection persuaded h husband that the change in her mien could not wholly account f the change in herself. She was no longer gay, no longer exuberan no longer light-hearted. The hard time she had experienced the baby's birth had left an apparently indelible effect upon he but Philip had been assured by the doctor this would pass. T months brought no change, however, and he began to see that h wife was really a different person from the child that had cor fruit-picking to Vacaville. The persistent demands of the ba harassed her; she disliked the responsibility motherhood entail chafed at the chains the child's care forged upon her, longed t her old irresponsible freedom. Philip was forced to the conclusi that she was not happy. It was an unpleasant fact to face. S seemed to derive a certain degree of satisfaction out of her hor her baby and her husband, but none of these brought real hap ness. She was discontented, forever quoting her friend, Virgin enviously commenting on that lady's freedom, her easy a luxurious life.

"Margie's tired out," Philip said to himself, troubled; "needs a rest,—a long vacation in the country."

He tried to persuade her to spend the summer with his c family in Vacaville, and Constance joined him in urging this, Marjorie stubbornly declined. She had unpleasant memories her last visit to Philip's home and nothing would induce her

make another. She wanted to go to Santa Cruz where Virginia Fisher expected to spend July and August, and for the first time since his marriage Philip appealed to his mother for money.

Finances had never been anything but a problem to the young Baldwins. Philip had recklessly spent over two thousand dollars in furnishing his small home far too elaborately, and the five hundred odd dollars which remained from the sale of the bonds had been slowly eaten up by the baby's coming, by their share in the mother-in-law's funeral expenses, and by the baby-food specialists it had been necessary to consult for the ailing Paul. Philip's salary had twice received small raises but Marjorie did not know how to economize and the grocer's and butcher's bills were never wholly paid. Philip had been obliged to borrow ahead on his salary to meet the last payment on his life insurance. Neither he nor Marjorie was of the type that worries about money matters. He was inclined to let the morrow take care of itself, although there were times when he realized painfully they were getting further and further in debt. Marjorie frankly refused to give the subject any serious thought; she looked upon it as her husband's concern, and would only try to do "the best she could" on what he gave her.

Money must not now be a consideration, Philip felt, when his wife's health demanded change and rest; the sea air would be good for the baby, too. All these points he set forth in a letter to his mother who promptly sent him the hundred dollars he requested. But a few days before her departure, Marjorie informed him she had decided to leave Paul behind with Constance.

"There is every reason why I should, Philip," she explained in rapid justification. "Connie's crazy to have him and he picks up awfully quick over there in Piedmont. I really *do* need a rest, and what rest do you suppose I'd get with the baby along? I'd have him on my hands all day long,—and all night too! And then there's the question of expense: it would cost a little more to take him,—there's extra milk and his clothes! I just want to eat and sleep and bask on the sand, and I promise you I'll come back made over."

Philip was disappointed. He had pictured his wife and his son together on the sand,—and leaving Paul in Piedmont with his aunt

was not the same thing at all. He vaguely felt that Marjorie had not played fairly with him and her argument about the additional cost of the baby's going struck him as absurd, particularly when he saw her spend six dollars and a half on a silk bathing-suit for herself. He voiced none of these thoughts. He was supremely anxious she should get back her old buoyant health and spirits, and a respite from taking care of the baby was, of course, what she needed most.

He put her aboard the train at the station and kissed her good-bye with much feeling.

"Have a good time, old girl; write me whenever you can. I wish to goodness I was going along, too! It's only three years ago that we were off to Del Monte, together. Gosh, Margie,—we don't seem like the same man and woman! . . . I'll miss you terribly,—I guess you know that."

He watched the train slide smoothly away, and caught a flicker of Marjorie's gloved hand through the closed window as she waved good-bye.

"She's had a tough time of it, all right," he thought; "girls don't know what an awful thing marriage is. . . . They're nothing but kids when they get into it, and they're mothers and old women before they know it!"

He slowly boarded the street-car that would take him back to the heart of the town and sat thoughtfully gazing at the familiar streets and houses that slid past. But it was not of his wife he was so soberly thinking but of his sister, Lucy.

§ 4.

He had several letters from Marjorie and their gaiety of tone persuaded him that Santa Cruz was accomplishing all he had hoped. Virginia Fisher was with her, and Virginia's fat, jolly husband came down two or three days each week, to take them all driving or fishing, or on a picnic up to Boulder Creek. They danced in the Casino every night. There was another woman at the Sea Beach with whom Margie had struck up a great friendship. Did he know Roy North, the cartoonist on the *Bulletin?* Lillian

North was his wife, and she was a "peach." They had a little boy about two years older than Paul. The Norths were down here for Roy's vacation; they were the jolliest kind of a couple and every day there was a "party."

Philip was delighted. He sent his wife additional money to stay until the end of July, but began to look impatiently forward to her return on the first of August, when she would come back to him the radiantly happy girl he had married. Secretly he hoped that in her new frame of mind she would consent to go up to the ranch with him for his own fortnight's vacation, and take the baby. His mother was eager to see her little grandson and in almost every letter urged him to bring his wife and child to visit her.

Constance had a hard struggle with little Paul's digestive apparatus during Marjorie's absence. He had reached the age when children begin to reach for things and had put something into his mouth that poisoned him, so that for two weeks he had screamed, retted and fought his food. His aunt hung over the child's crib with a vigilance at which Philip could only marvel. Constance loved his son far more than the mother did. All babies had a claim on her affection, and she was never tired of fussing with little Paul, raising the window in the room an inch, shading the glaring light from his eyes while with rapid, deft hands she swiftly changed him, trying the water in his bath a dozen times before its temperature satisfied her.

"Connie,—I never saw anyone like you," Philip exclaimed one day in admiration; "you take more trouble with that baby——!"

"He's an old lamb! His Aunt Connie's going to see he gets all well again. . . . And, Phil, I'm going to give Margie the talking-to of her life about the way to feed this child and you've got to help. You can't bring a baby up in any slap-dash sort of fashion, least of all, this one."

"Constance has a rare nature," Stanley Trevor commented. "She's always thinking of others and doing good. She has the true Christian character."

"Oh,—*hush!*" Constance exclaimed with good-humored impatience. "Ain't he awful?" she said to Philip.

A shadow crossed her husband's face.

"I wish, my dear——" he began.

"All right, all right," she interrupted hastily; then mincingly she enunciated: "*Is not* he awful?"

Philip glanced at his brother-in-law's lean face, and wondered why the man always irritated him. There was nothing about him to criticize; he was singularly devoid of faults. He neither drank nor smoked, was conspicuously conscientious, conducted himself in an entirely exemplary fashion. Philip had heard that the officials of the Market Street Bank thought extremely well of him. He was quiet, shrewd, a hard worker. Philip said to himself he would have liked Trevor better had he been occasionally remiss. Even the man's praise of his wife, and his mild criticism of her ungrammatical speech,—crisply enunciated as only Stanley Trevor ever spoke,—annoyed Philip vastly. Yet Constance seemed satisfied. They lived a placid life together; there never were any bickerings or disagreements. Philip often spent a quiet evening or a Sunday in Piedmont, and the harmony that prevailed in the little bungalow was pleasantly soothing. Constance was always busy with her garden, her sewing, her kitchen or the needs of the baby; her husband usually spent his hours deep in the pages of some thick and formidable-looking book on banking.

§ 5.

When the first of August arrived, Philip confidently expected Marjorie to come home, but instead she wrote him a voluminous eager letter telling him that Virginia Fisher had persuaded her to remain at Santa Cruz for another month as her guest. She begged Philip not to be cross, and urged him with many underlined words to come down himself to Santa Cruz for his own vacation.

He was keenly disappointed. He missed his wife, and found cooking his own breakfast, and going home to bed in the unairy deserted flat, dreary and dismal. There was nothing to do about the matter that he could see. He reluctantly decided to go to Santa Cruz for a few days, spend them with Margie, and then perhaps he might be able to persuade her to run up to the ranch for the remainder of his vacation.

A day or so before he left, Roy North came in to his office

"Had to come in and know Margie's husband," he exclaimed, haking Philip's hand vigorously. "I want to tell you, you've got regular peacherino,—know what I mean? She and the kid get long first rate; Lillian's crazy about Marge. . . . Say, you got to ome lunch with me. Get your hat and we'll go have chow."

Philip was somewhat staggered by the young man's breeziness nd familiarity. Roy North was a black-haired, dark-skinned, andified youth with an Italian cast of feature, who wore his straw at at an angle, affected a diamond scarf-pin, and forever had a igarette between his fingers or dangling from his lips. It was the ashion of the day to wear narrow, close-fitting trousers, and Torth's nether garments fitted his trim legs with almost the scanti- ess of tights. He was handsome in a glittering kind of boldness hich both attracted and repelled.

His enthusiasm over Marjorie knew no bounds and he expres- ively waved his small fine hands across the lunch table as he xpatiated upon her charms. He produced an envelope containing number of quick sketches he had made of her. They were unde- iably clever; sharp, lightning pencil drafts, no more than ten or a ozen strokes at most, which somehow had caught Marjorie's eatures, Marjorie's carriage, Marjorie's characteristic gestures.

"I tell you what, Baldwin, that wife of yours is a humdinger. he's got something awfully French about her,—know what I ean? She's the life of our crowd down there and Lil thinks e's outersight. And say, man, how about her dancing! Well ow, let me tell you—*she—knows—how—to dance!* She's a regu- r fairy on her feet,—butterfly,—know what I mean?"

Philip found himself wondering, as he climbed back on his gh-stool after lunch, why he resented North's praise of his wife. e was glad he liked her, glad she liked him, but there was some- ing irritating nevertheless in North's fulsome tributes. He decided did not care to have his wife's virtues tagged for him by an tsider. He had known Marjorie long before the Norths had scovered her, and he had thought so well of her as to ask her to arry him!

Something of the same irritation returned to him when Mrs. orth, who had accompanied Marjorie to the station to meet him his arrival at Santa Cruz, sat with her arm about his wife all

the way back to the hotel in the dusty, canvas-covered 'bus. Throughout the short drive, she gazed eagerly into Marjorie's face with frank adoring eyes, shifting her glance to Philip occasionally, as if inviting him to share her enthusiasm.

He was delighted with his wife's altered appearance. He found her radiant, blooming. Her brown skin had tanned with a soft, rich evenness, and taken on a healthy firmness; her red lips were redder than ever and her dark eyes were alive with new light. All her buoyancy and gaiety had returned and she was full of ready chatter and excited laughter. He felt a little strange with her at first. When they were alone in their hotel room, he drew her upon his knees, and folded her in his arms, cuddling her as he used to do when they were first married. They kissed each other lovingly, hungrily.

"Oh, Phil—Phil! It's so good to have you here!" She flung her arms tightly around his neck and covered his neck and cheek with quick kisses. *"Oh!* I've been having such fun!—such a *good time!"*

He had never seen his little wife so hilarious. There was not a moment when she was ready to rest, or sit down, or talk with him quietly. He had not been in the hotel a quarter-of-an-hour before she dragged him off to the Casino where "the crowd" was waiting. Here they found Virginia Fisher, her fat husband, the coal dealer, Lillian North and half-a-dozen others. There was an immediate outburst of cries and hand-clapping when Marjorie appeared, and everyone in turn had to wring Philip's hand and greet him cordially.

"What'll you have, Mr. Baldwin? What'll you have to drink? Something cool—a little wet,—hey? I c'n recommend their mint juleps; they're really great!"

The invitation came from Virginia Fisher's husband, the coal man. He was evidently the purveyor for the party. There was never a moment during the day or night, Philip noticed, when Jimmy Fisher was not eager to spend his money in giving "the crowd" a good time.

Lillian North in some indefinable way reminded Philip of her husband. She was tall,—taller by half a head than Marjorie,—with flashing small eyes and black glistening hair whose abundance

ade her face look thin and colorless. About her eyes and lips as a network of fine nervous wrinkles, and she daubed her pale kin with powder and rouge, coating her thin mouth with lip-red. he talked like her husband and had many of his mannerisms, ngering her cigarettes in the same nervous fashion. She proeeded to monopolize Philip and took up the song of his wife's raises where Roy had left off.

"You know, Mr. Baldwin,—Marjorie's got one of the loveliest ispositions in the world. She's just as sweet as she can be. he's the life of everything down here and everybody's just crazy bout her. I bet you didn't know when you got married how vfully lucky you were!"

Philip acknowledged his good fortune with an indulgent smile.

"Well, I just think she's a peach,—a regular peacherino,—and said so the very first day I met her. And say,—you know, Mr. aldwin,—you know what I thought? I thought Marjorie was Iaude Adams!" She interrupted herself with a shriek of self-erision. "You know, I thought Maude Adams was down here, erhaps, taking a rest for the summer, and there's a lot about Iargie that makes you think of Maude. Say, don't you think Iargie looks a lot like Maude Adams sometimes? . . . Well, I ew after Roy and I said to him . . ."

Philip's thoughts wandered with his eyes about the noisy ble. He would not have recognized giggling Virginia Parsons the gaudy, fashionable Mrs. Jimmy Fisher. She wore an mmense peach-basket summer hat, covered with the gayest flowers, nd a loose linen coat of Battenberg lace over a salmon-colored tin, tight-fitting vest. She affected a slightly bored society anner, but was ready enough to add her penetrating laugh to the hers. He thought he had never listened to so many shrill voices. hen they laughed, which they seemed ready to do on the slightest rovocation, the women made no effort to check their mirth; they elighted in letting out the most piercing screams.

He did not recognize his wife in this gathering. Her high-tched voice strove with others equally strident, to make itself ard. He listened to her shrieks of mirth amid the general arti-ial hilarious hubbub, and watched her pretty brown face work-g, her cheeks flushed, her eyes roving excitedly, her red lips

stretched wide in a hard smile. It came to him with bitter disappointment, that she had drifted far away from him, and that there was no coaxing her back to her old self for the present, no possibility of persuading her to come with him to Vacaville.

He could find no pleasure in the life she was leading, no companionship with her, no satisfaction. In the morning she would be eager to meet "the crowd" for an early swim, and it was customary after the plunge in the breakers to breakfast in the Casino all together rather than in the hotel dining-room. There was tennis then or Jimmy Fisher had engaged a tally-ho to take the party for a drive, or a plan would be on foot to go by train up to Boulder Creek for a picnic luncheon. If the day's program did not provide for absence from the noon-day meal, the company collected immediately afterwards to arrange for another swim, a fishing expedition or a drive. Some form of active pleasure must constantly be suggested for their diversion. In the evening they danced in the ball-room to the music of the hotel's orchestra, or engaged in bowling contests in the Casino. Philip enjoyed the bowling. He made the highest score of the season and was pleased with the general admiration of his performance. Under other circumstances he might have found "the crowd" amusing, and have shared in Marjorie's delight at the round of pleasure.

But he wanted his wife; he wanted her to himself; he wanted the uninterrupted intimacy they had known when, like children, they had scoured the beaches near Monterey, climbed the spray-wet rocks, and poked their fingers into the sea-anemones. The Marjorie of those happily-remembered days was an altogether different girl from the Marjorie of Santa Cruz.

Roy North joined the crowd just before Philip's departure, coming down on the late Saturday night special from San Francisco, to spend Sunday in their midst. His advent proved the final touch to Philip's complete discomfiture. The cartoonist's constant and inane comments on whatever subject arose, his insistence upon his own way, his reiteration of the silly phrase "You know what I mean?", his loud voice and whispering intimacy with Marjorie disgusted Philip.

There was one more thing which contributed its own particular share to his general disgust and vexation. Marjorie had borrowed

had been given,—it did not matter which,—a number of Virnia Fisher's gowns. He had thought his wife particularly wellessed when she met him upon his arrival, but he rarely noticed arjorie's clothing, and it was not until the following day that the ason for her attractive appearance was explained. He realized th sickening humiliation that in addition to paying his wife's tel bill, Virginia Fisher was giving her clothes! He did not see ere he was justified in objecting, but the fact angered him.

He bore his resentment in silence, and tried manfully to keep his fe from detecting it. He had an instinctive feeling that while grievance was real enough to him, Marjorie would consider it iculous, and in an argument with her he foresaw he would make headway. His safety lay in flight and at the end of three days kissed his wife good-bye and took himself off to the ranch.

§ 6.

When Wilbur Lansing returned in September from his long riod of soldiering in the Philippines, Philip and Marjorie were e more established in their home. A hospital transport brought nsing back to his native land for he had been extremely ill from teric poisoning in the islands and was still emaciated and weak. soon as he was well enough to stand the long voyage, he had en ordered back to the United States, to be mustered out. After was discharged, Philip insisted upon his making his home porarily with Marjorie and himself, and persuaded him finally go up to the ranch for a long rest. Philip's mother and the dge had frequently inquired about "fidus Achates," who had nt one vacation with them, and their son could assure him of a rm welcome. He was deeply concerned over Wilbur's appeare. His friend looked haggard and a great deal older. Though y twenty-four, Philip's junior by two years, his hard service the army had aged him impressively, but he was still the same ent, impetuous youth Philip had always loved.

The opportunity for renewing his old intimacy with Wilbur ant a great deal to Philip at this time, for he felt he was more ess excluded from the charmed circle of Marjorie's new friends. telephone rang continually in the flat now, and he often

finished his dinner alone while an endless giggling conversation took place over the wire between Marjorie and Virginia Fisher or Lillian North. Half the time his wife was out when he reached home late in the afternoon, and on such occasions she usually arrived late for dinner. Frequently she persuaded him to take her to noisy, long-drawn-out meals at *Coppa's* restaurant,—a popular resort of artists and newspaper reporters,—where Roy North and a crowd of his extraordinary intimates surrounded Marjorie, hung over her chair and whispered in her ear between gulps of red wine and long inhalations from cigarettes. For some reason, Marjorie was christened by her admirers "Ormuzd" and poets wrote sonnets about her, while artists begged her to let them paint her picture. Philip made an honest effort to like his wife's new friends. He made little or no protest when she coaxed him to these restaurant gatherings. She accused him of being dull, and he was aware the accusation was more or less just. He tried to get the point of view of the poets and artists, to drink his share of red wine, and he often laughed uproariously with the others even when the point of their mirth escaped him.

On one particular evening, after an unusually hilarious dinner at *Coppa's*, the Norths and their friends declared against bringing the festivities to an end, and decided to adjourn to the Norths' studio on Russian Hill, where they proceeded to enthrone Marjorie upon a dais, to put vine leaves in her unbound hair, and to drink themselves into a state of semi-intoxication. A long-legged, blond-haired youth with a wasp's waist and a feminine voice created a sensation by suddenly appearing clad only in a leopard's skin, with suggested horns in his hair, carrying a set of Pan's pipes made from the graduated lengths of a broom handle. He leaped about the dais with wild antics, and flung himself, finally exhausted, at Marjorie's feet. The applause evoked by his exhibition affected the young satyr's sense of propriety, found him new energy, and incited him to seize the enthroned Ormuzd in his arms. Philip reached for him with one hand, caught him by a bare ankle and flung him half-way across the room, and in sullen anger took an impressed and frightened Marjorie home.

There were no more artists' parties after that, but the episode was far from bringing to an end Marjorie's intimacy with the

Norths and Fishers. Philip would find them at his house for inner, was forced to accompany them to the *Orpheum* and later n to sleepy suppers at a café, or to join exploring expeditions nto Chinatown. At ten o'clock, or even later, the Norths or the ishers would stop at the Baldwins' flat and persuade Marjorie o go downtown with them or to Fillmore Street for beer, cracked rab or an oyster loaf. If Philip declined to go, Marjorie went ithout him. Her husband did not know how to handle the situa-ion. He could not bring himself to say Marjorie had no right to e intimate with these people, whom he was learning to detest.

Nothing was satisfactory about the existence they were leading, o Philip's thinking. The house ran along in a slipshod, haphazard ort of way from day to day, the slatternly woman in the kitchen ooked in a slatternly fashion and, Philip suspected, sent a gener-us bundle of food and other supplies away two or three times week by her slatternly daughter who appeared with compromising egularity. The bills grew steadily larger and an increasing num-er of them month by month remained unpaid. Even the baby gan to lose the weight and bloom which Constance had labored hard all summer to gain for him. Philip could plainly see arjorie neglected him. The old crying and fretting spells turned, and his father was obliged to resume his nightly vigils.

Matters came to a head suddenly when a collector from one of e largest downtown stores called at Philip's office, presenting m with a bill of staggering proportions for goods purchased by rs. Baldwin and charged to an account in his name of which he ew nothing. Marjorie was startled by her husband's demand r an explanation, and burst into voluble and nervous self-stification.

"Virginia arranged the account for me, Phil,—she persuaded to charge a few things I actually needed and I've had to get a w things more from time to time. I *had* to get them, Phil. told them I'd pay something on account next month! . . . Phil, I just can't get along on what you give me,—there isn't enough! wish *you'd* try it! . . . there's not a woman I know that isn't tter dressed than I am . . . and I even have to wear Virgie's st-off clothing! Lillian has fifty dollars a month to spend just she likes. . . ."

Philip was familiar with Marjorie's way when criticized, attacking in return, and working herself into a state of aggriev self-pity.

In the stormy interview which followed, he persisted in aski her what she proposed to do about the matter. His calm reite tion of the question drove her into a violent fit of sobbing whi left him coldly unmoved. He had not an idea what to do abo it himself. In the back of his head there lay the thought another much-to-be-regretted appeal to his mother. He continu grimly to plague his wife with interrogations because he found certain satisfaction in goading her, and because he truly wan her to realize how seriously she had involved him. But whe driven to desperation, she hysterically proposed they sell all th new furniture, rugs, pictures, everything the flat contained, a try boarding, he was taken unawares and showed the dism created by the bare suggestion.

His alarm did not escape his wife. She instantly fastened up the plan in retaliation, urging that she hated housekeeping, hat its cares and responsibilities, hated the dreary routine it involve she asserted that by boarding they could afford a nurse for t baby, and voicing this argument, she immediately saw more fr dom for herself, and made up her mind to force Philip to ag to the sacrifice.

In the end he gave way. The thought of borrowing from mother was repugnant to him, and he truly meant it when he s to himself that anything else would be preferable. When alternative was presented, he accepted it.

The auction of all the handsome furnishings they had happily bought together took place late in the fall. Virgi Fisher and Lillian North bought some of the best pieces. Ph saw his cherished bookcase with the sets of books he had had much pleasure in selecting, the Kipling, the Stevenson and 'slightly rubbed' set of the Encyclopædia Britannica, pass i the possession of the Norths and the thumbing inspection by man he had grown so cordially to dislike. He and Marjorie fo a small family hotel at the top of the Jones Street hill, and tled down with a few of their most treasured possessions, in confining quarters of two rooms.

§ 7.

A bright rift in the clouds that seemed to darken Philip's very outlook was the news Lucy wrote him of her engagement to Wilbur Lansing. Their selection of one another seemed to the girl's brother extremely happy. He telegraphed his enthusiastic congratulations and was eager that everyone he knew should rejoice with him. Marjorie, he was aware, would be apathetic, but there were many of his associates at the office who pleasantly remembered Lansing, and to these Philip unburdened himself. He persuaded a number of them to come over to a neighboring café after closing hours, and the joint health of Lansing and his future bride was joyously drunk.

An ardent youth, rejuvenated and glowing with first love, greeted him when Wilbur returned to San Francisco. He was full of a lover's rapturous praise of Lucy, and fired with ambition to make money. He declared vigorously no clerkship nor salaried position interested him; he was after a job where he could make good on a commission basis, and was full of ideas about the real estate business.

"My God, Phil!" he cried, working himself up into one of his eady enthusiasm, "this city's going to have a boom pretty soon, nd you only have to make one big sale in a year to live like a rince. I met a chap,—a fellow named Bob Barlow, out in the slands, and he used to clean up ten thousand a year back in New ersey. I know Herbert Calder, of Calder & Stubbs,—they're rst-rate real estate people—and I'm going to make him take me n, and I tell you, Philip old boy, when the time's ripe, I'm going hasing the big stuff myself. Do you realize, man, that the real tate game is one of the few businesses in the world where a an doesn't need any capital? Calder's got to give me a job, nd as soon as the salary warrants it, Lucy and I are going to get arried. . . . Say,—could a man want a better little wife than at girl? Isn't she a peach?"

Philip often used to think Wilbur had some mysterious power f compelling people to do what he wanted. It was part of the an's engaging personality. He must only want what he was

after badly enough. As a boy, Wilbur had been rather happy-go-lucky, but now he was deadly in earnest, and within a week he was busily at work in the offices of Calder & Stubbs, and had decided he and Lucy could be married on her seventeenth birthday.

CHAPTER VIII.

§ 1.

Several weeks later Philip received an extraordinary letter from his father.

"My dear son," wrote the Judge. "It is with profound regret that I feel compelled to turn to you with a request to execute a commission for me which my infirmities prevent me from undertaking in person. Though aware of the indelicacy in selecting you as my emissary, I nevertheless feel that I can with safety appeal to your affection and loyalty, and can depend upon you to represent me effectually and with intelligence.

"Long before I met your mother,—in the early sixties,—a Spanish woman by the name of Dolores Mendoza and I made our home together. She was a good woman and there was nothing sordid in our intimacy, although there was never any talk of marriage between us. We lived together as man and wife, and when I was stricken with a malignant fever at the time I enlisted in support of the cause of the Confederacy, she saved my life by her devoted attendance at my bedside. Three children were born to us, only one of whom,—a girl,—is still alive. In every possible way I have met my obligations to Señora Mendoza and have provided for her support and the support of our child unfailingly for the past thirty years. I think you will discover that I have acquitted myself generously, and that whatever sentiment Dolores still feels with regard to me, a sense of gratitude predominates.

"I am advised by post that this lady is now upon her deathbed. She importunes me, through her daughter's hand, to visit her before the end, and in this, her last request, I would not fail her, were it possible for me to make the journey. As evidence of my friendship and deep interest in her welfare, and my profound sense of gratitude to her for the devotion to which I owe my life, I ask you, my son, to go to her in my stead. Tell her of the affliction which renders me helpless, assure her of my affectionate interest, give her the sealed envelope I entrust to your care, and report to me if there is any material help I may provide which will in any way contribute to her peace of mind or bodily comfort during these, her last hours.

"I am aware you will undertake this commission with a certain reluctance which is, of course, regrettable, as is the unfortunate necessity which compels me to turn to you in my extremity. However you may regard the matter, I do not believe I should weigh your personal feelings in the face of so pressing an appeal, even at the risk of detracting from your filial respect and affection for me. I am trusting you to treat this affair in the strictest confidence, particularly with regard to your brother and sister, and your mother.

"I am, my dear son, always your affectionate father,

"SAMUEL BALDWIN."

Philip with difficulty located the address his father included in a postscript. Although cognizant of reluctance in executing the mission, as his father had warned him, he had also a certain curiosity, and he lost no time in setting about his errand.

Señora Mendoza lived in the Mexican quarter of the city, beyond Pacific Street. Philip discovered a diminutive cottage with a sagging, dilapidated picket-fence surrounding a sickly garden of nasturtiums and brown grass. It was early in the evening and the street was full of weird twilight, a mixture of spring after-sunset dusk and the pale yellow radiance of street lamps. The house had a dismal aspect, the shades were drawn, there was not a light anywhere. Tucked into the lower corner of a pane in the bay window, Philip deciphered a blue-and-white enameled sign bearing the words: *Señora Mendoza: Guitar and Mandolin.*

He was obliged to twist the bell in the middle of the front door a second time before he heard the sound of steps within. A chain rattled and a white face appeared in the dark aperture. He was startled by the toneless voice that answered his inquiry. Señora Mendoza had died on Saturday.

"What did you want?" demanded the woman's voice as Philip stood, dumb and staring, on the shallow door-step.

"I'm Judge Samuel Baldwin's son," he began clumsily. "I came—my father——" He stopped confused, painfully embarrassed. There was a long silence. The door knob clicked as though abruptly released; moments passed; then the door drifted open.

"Won't you come in?" said the faint voice. "I'll light the lamp."

She was a tall woman, nearly as tall as Philip, with sad eyes

and gray wisps of fine hair floating about her eyes. When she sat down and her features came within the circle of the lamp-light, Philip experienced a shock. Although dark-skinned and dark-eyed, she resembled his father in a most extraordinary manner; the likeness was uncanny. She had the same thick brows, the same heavy nose, the same proud, aristocratic carriage of the head.

"You—you're——?" Philip began.

"I'm Maria,—Señora Mendoza's daughter," said the gray-haired woman.

"And my father's," Philip added, mechanically.

"Yes,—I—I know," she assented.

He sat gazing awkwardly, stonily. It occurred to him that the woman before him was his half-sister. It struck him as fantastic, weird, amazing.

"I wrote Judge Baldwin on Friday. We—we didn't know my mother was so ill; the doctor wasn't alarmed. And then on Saturday—the priest came—just in time. . . . The funeral was only yesterday."

"I'm sorry—terribly sorry," Philip murmured. He went on to explain his father's letter and how he had wasted no time in coming. He drew from his pocket the envelope his father had sent him. The woman studied its inscription, deliberated, then slowly broke the seal. The sheet trembled in her hand as she read, tears gathered in her eyes, and dropped unchecked upon the black knitted shawl pinned across her breast. Presently the letter fluttered from her hands into her lap and she caught her handkerchief to her eyes.

"My poor mother,—my poor, poor mother," she sobbed.

There was an awkward interval. Philip clasped and reclasped his big hands and his palms became moist with sweat. A woman's tears always embarrassed him and he was conscious of a vague distress. He was catching a glimpse into a chapter of his father's life in which he had no part; he did not want to see; he did not want to know. . . . What was in the letter? He glanced at it involuntarily, and recognized his father's strong and definite handwriting. It was in Spanish.

"You must forgive me," said Maria Mendoza, drying her eyes and struggling with her quivering breath. "It just reminded me,—

brought back memories. . . . We all lived . . . we had such a pretty home,—a hacienda with a patio near Pajaro. There were grapevines and peppers—and my mother used to do her embroidery for the Mission sitting under the grapevine. There was an altar cloth; she was years at work over it. I remember it all so clearly. My little brothers were living then, and my mother was so happy when—when Judge Baldwin rode over from the mine. Pedro was seven, so brave and proud and tall, but my mother, I think, thought most of the little blue-eyed boy,—her Samuel. . . . They were both drowned, you know, . . . in the marsh. That was in '71, and then my mother,—well, her mind was never just right after that. We tried the country for awhile and then we came here;—that's thirty years ago."

Philip could find nothing to say. He was dumb before this human tragedy, so tersely summarized. He pictured Dolores Mendoza bending over her needle-work in the flecked shadow of the grape arbor, the children,—the two boys playing in the hot sunshine, the young girl at her mother's elbow, the clatter of his father's horse suddenly startling them, transporting them with joy. He thought of his mother, of himself, of Harry and Lucy, of the silent orchards and ripening fruit, of the old weather-beaten home with its flowering fuchsias and sweet-smelling honeysuckle; then of those others,—the thirty years of empty memories, of patient living and colorless existence, of the loneliness and dreariness, of shaken wits and tireless devotion.

He plodded homeward through the noisy, brilliantly lighted streets of the Latin quarter, indifferent to sight and sound, profoundly depressed. He pondered upon his father's life, his code of conduct. He had been aware from earliest boyhood,—just how he did not know,—that the Judge had had an adventurous career in California's early days. He had listened many a time to his stories of "Peg-leg" Smith and that boisterous, tense, rollicking time when the Eureka lode was discovered, and Jill Wencl had run her famous boarding-house. His father had known women—many women; it was no secret. The old man had a reputation for having been in his youth what Dermot Phelan once described as a "lady-killer." Philip had taken it all for granted, as belonging to the old '49 days, the Wild West, as part of the adventurous

life, to be happily recalled and made wondrous and alluring now, through the veil of time.

And now this ghost of the past! A horny finger had parted the veil and through the rent had touched him rudely on the shoulder. His father—the grandiloquent Judge! Philip had always admired his father,—admired his amazing knowledge, his flowery speech, his extravagant ideas, his lordly aristocratic bearing. It was difficult to think of him as being susceptible to human weakness. His son was ready enough to forgive him for any youthful escapades. A young man,—handsome, chivalrous,—those early days of gold and adventure . . .; it was easily understood, easily accepted. But Dolores Mendoza? Thirty years of unbalanced reason,—and the two boys,—their little bodies floating together in the marsh,—*his* sons as well as hers? And the other, that sad-eyed, gray-haired woman, his daughter, who for thirty years,—her whole life practically,—had known only the dreary routine of daily attendance upon that twisted brain?

The Judge had mentioned compensation. Perhaps Philip was doing him an injustice; perhaps he had more than fulfilled his obligations, had done all that was humanly possible. His son did not know the facts; there must be another side; how was he qualified to judge? His father probably had made a generous allowance. . . . But thirty years?

Philip walked all the way home, enjoying the exertion of climbing the steep hills without slackening his pace. It was still some minutes before ten o'clock, and the old porter, who guarded the entrance of their small family hotel, told him Mrs. Baldwin had not yet come in. It was a familiar announcement. Philip was not surprised. He went upstairs, and let himself in to the little suite he and Marjorie occupied. There was a pleasant dusk in the room; the reflection of street lamps showed in bright patches on the white ceiling. He forebore to switch on the lights, pulled a plush arm-chair nearer the window and sat gazing out into the dim street, lit with alternate circles of radiance, busy once more with his thoughts.

What were a man's obligations? Suppose the union of Dolores Mendoza and his father had been sanctified by the Church and the law, would the tie have held in spite of a deranged brain?

Suppose he and Harry had been drowned in the Sacramento River as little boys, and his mother's mind had tottered from the shock, her reason flown? What then? There was no justice in tying a man to an insane woman for life and the husband could obtain his freedom in a court of law. But what about the daughter? *There* had been unquestionable devotion, a faithfulness that had stood between her mother and the yawning asylum for thirty years. . . . Philip frowned heavily. It was perplexing, too complicated, too twisted and tangled. . . . If the Judge had never married his mother, he, himself, and Harry and Lucy would never have been born!

There was a familiar laugh on the stairs, hurrying feet and a small clamor in the hall. The door burst open and Marjorie stood arrested an instant on the threshold.

"Phil? . . . Well, for goodness' sake!—what're you sitting in the dark for? You're not sick? Well, of *all* things! . . . Come on,—fix the lights. Here's Roy and Lillian and the Fishers; we're going to have a little game of poker. Come on, Lil,—clear the table, Phil,—who's got the chips? . . . You'll have to sit on the couch, Roy, we've only got five chairs,—and say, Jimmy, put the beer out on the window-sill; it'll be cold enough, I guess."

§ 2.

One morning Wilbur telephoned Philip full of excitement.

"Meet me downtown, to-night, Phil. I've got a scheme that'll knock your eye out. . . . Oh, any place,—let's say the *Poodle Dog* at eight o'clock."

Philip found him in one of the little private cubicles upstairs in the restaurant, covering sheets of paper with rapid figures.

"Sit down and order something to drink, and listen to your Uncle Dudley. I got an idea that's going to make us rich,—you and me both, Phil,—a lot of big money. Now, you listen sharp."

Jimmy Spears, who had several months ago left the Insurance Company for a better position with the Market Street Bank, had idly remarked to Wilbur one day, when at lunch together, that

he knew of a way whereby a man with nerve could make a pile of money. He had overheard a conversation between Lewisohn, of Hershfelder & Lewisohn, a large real estate firm, and the President of his Bank, old Andrew Paris, in regard to a piece of property on the corner of Fifth and Market Streets, the site of the Lincoln Grammar School. The Board of Supervisors had decided the school building was too dilapidated to repair, and the corner, in the heart of the business district, a poor spot for a school. They had resolved to lease the property for a term of ninety-nine years, and advertisements calling for bids had been published in the newspapers; the bids were to be opened at ten o'clock on the last day of April. Young Spears had heard Lewisohn tell Andrew Paris that several other concerns,—operators in real estate whose names he couldn't exactly remember,—had all agreed to put in bids sufficiently low to insure Paris getting the property. Lewisohn had called to tell the bank president that the Mercantile Realty Company,—an organization hitherto feared,—had agreed to submit no bid whatever upon a promise from Hershfelder & Lewisohn to allow a certain option they held on an Oakland tract of land to lapse.

It was a clear case of conspiracy to defraud the city. Andrew Paris' bid would be slightly higher than any other submitted, and the probabilities were that the bank president would secure the lease at a rental far below what the property was actually worth.

Spears believed the story, asserted he could prove it, and that it would be a big feature, well paid for by any one of the newspapers, but he confessed frankly he had not the nerve to do anything about it. Lansing, however, had seen other and bigger possibilities.

"My Lord, Phil!" he exclaimed, clutching his friend's coat-sleeve. "Don't you see what this gang of cut-throats is trying to do? What do you suppose that property's worth? I asked Calder casually to-day, and he said two hundred and fifty thousand, probably more. Paris is trying to get it for less than half that amount. If he offers $5,000 a year for it, that's five per cent on only a hundred thousand. Now, by golly, what's to prevent you and me taking a fly at this thing ourselves? Suppose we figure

the corner's worth only $125,000; rent on that will be only $6,250 a year, and it ought to be ten or twelve. What's the harm in seeing how we'd come out?"

"But—good heavens!—Wilbur, I'm getting a hundred and twenty-five dollars a month now, and you're getting less! . . . You're talking kind of crazy, aren't you?"

"Crazy be damned! It's big ideas and the nerve to put 'em across that make rich men. I'm not going to be a rotten clerk all the rest of my life. I'm going after big stuff. . . . If you and I put in a bid just a little higher than Paris', who's going to get that lease?"

"I bet Andrew Paris does."

"How can he? The Supervisors have *got* to award the lease to the highest bidder. The bids have *got* to be published. . . . Now, listen, Phil," Wilbur's hands trembled a little in his excitement, and he wet his dry lips, "a certified check for ten per cent has got to be submitted with each bid as evidence of the bidder's reliability and good faith,—but, Phil, the ad expressly states 'ten per cent of the first year's rental.' Andrew Paris is going to send in a check for $500——"

"How d'you know that?"

"Why, damn it, man, Jimmy heard him say so! Now, suppose we send in ours with $600? That's all we're risking—and there's no risk in it, because if somebody outbids us, the certified check'll come back! The Board's got to return the checks of the rejected bids. Now, supposing you and I get a ninety-nine year lease for that corner lot on Market and Fifth, for $600 cash outlay, you mean to tell me, when the fact we own that lease is published in the papers, we can't make a lot of money out of it? Why say, man, you *know* we can!"

Philip sat scowling heavily, trying to follow Wilbur's rapid words. His friend went over the scheme again carefully.

"Why don't you tackle this alone? Why do you want me in on it?" Philip inquired.

"Well, Phil,—I want you as a partner, somebody to talk things over with,—and I want you to dig up the money, say a thousand dollars."

Philip laughed.

"Just a minute," Lansing went on, "and I'll show you something. You write your father and tell him you want him to lend you a thousand dollars for ninety days. You're taking no risks with the money because, as I tell you, if we don't get the bid, the check will be returned by the clerk of the Board, and you can immediately pay the money back. If we *get* the lease, that'll be security enough to borrow twenty times as much from any bank in the city. I can't raise a cent; there's not a soul I can turn to; you've got to persuade your father to help us."

Philip shook his head. The Judge would scoff at the bare suggestion; he could not consider an appeal to his mother.

"Old Dermot Phelan might go on my note to the Vacaville Bank," Philip said slowly.

"Great! That's just the idea! You don't have to tell anyone a damn thing about what we want the money for. . . . Phil,—I just feel inside my bones, we're going to clean up!"

§ 3.

Philip was right in believing old Phelan would make no objection to endorsing his note, and within a fortnight the money was deposited to Lansing's credit in a San Francisco bank. Philip regarded his friend's proposed flyer into high finance with considerable amusement. He had not much faith in its success, but he was willing to take his share of the gamble, although Wilbur insisted it was not one. But Philip speedily forgot the matter; a quarrel with Marjorie, more serious than any they had had, drove it from his mind.

For some time it had been apparent that his life with his wife had grown into a mockery of marriage. One day when he went down alone to his dismal dinner in the close, over-heated, stuffy little dining-room of the hotel, it occurred to him he was paying for the support of a woman who gave him practically nothing in return. The week before he had received in his mail a bill for two hats bought at some previous time, and a peremptory demand from a shoe-store for the settlement of an account, long over-due. In the latter appeared such items as slippers, patent-

leather pumps, rhinestone buckles. His hotel bill contained unexpected charges from the newsstand, and the most recent included an item amounting to nearly six dollars for telephone calls. There was no money with which to pay these extras, and he had been hoping to get himself a new suit by Easter. The baby needed undershirts and some kind of a sweater or coat, as the melancholy nurse they employed had mentioned in her melancholy voice. Even she, Philip thought bitterly, was aware the baby's mother would not be interested in her complaint, and therefore had come to him.

Marjorie and he occupied single beds now. The nurse arrived at seven every morning and took charge of Paul, who by that time usually had begun to fret and whimper. She dressed and took him downstairs to breakfast, while Philip got up and followed them to the dining-room half-an-hour later. Marjorie never disturbed herself. She slept through all the mild commotion, her head deep in the soft pillow, a hand tucked beneath her cheek. Philip would leave the hotel without exchanging a word with her. When he returned from the office at five-thirty or six o'clock, Marjorie usually was out. More than half the time, she did not come home to dinner; four nights out of the week he ate alone. The melancholy nurse remained with the baby until eight o'clock and then took herself away. If Marjorie had not returned by that hour, Philip, if he had an engagement downtown or wanted to go to the *Orpheum* to fill an empty evening, faced the alternative of staying at home, or leaving the baby alone.

When Marjorie came in Philip was generally asleep, driven early to bed by sheer boredom. It was usually eleven or twelve o'clock when she arrived. If he was awake, or reading, she vouchsafed no explanation of where she had been or what she had been doing. Apparently with an easy conscience, she greeted him cheerfully, bent solicitously over the baby's crib, tucked the small body in comfortably, hung up her hat and things in the closet, and happily humming, proceeded to get ready for bed. Her chatter had no significance beyond the indication of her mood. She seemed serenely oblivious of having neglected either husband or child, and would have affected, Philip was aware, a mild astonishment at the bare suggestion. Yet he knew she was thoroughly conscious of his

dissatisfaction. She never mentioned the Norths nor the Fishers, and made no comment upon his frowns and sullen silences. She irritated, baffled and evaded him.

"I'd have more satisfaction out of a woman of the streets," Philip said to himself in anger.

During the lonely evenings, seated by the window in the plush armchair, the lights switched off, gazing into the lamp-lit street, he asked himself questions that worked him up into a fine fury. Why should he deny himself his much-needed suit to pay for Marjorie's wanton extravagances? What did she give him in return for the clothes she wore, the food she ate? What kind of a mother was she who never spent more than an hour a day with her child, contented herself with a hypocritical show of tenderness, a miserable pretense of solicitude when she came in late from profitless companionship with yelling, vulgar friends, tired and pocket-eyed, her hair and breath reeking with the smell of tobacco? What did he, her husband, get out of it? He had even to make a bundle of his own wash and take it under his arm to a neighboring laundry, to be sure of a clean shirt and collar. The melancholy nurse sewed on his buttons or he sewed them on for himself, and it was months since Marjorie had darned a sock. He did not have a whole pair to his name.

It was after one of these long interrogatory sessions, in which one rebellious rage had given place to another, that Marjorie failed to appear until after one o'clock. The front door of the hotel was locked at midnight and the night watchman had to let her in. She came in pale and weary, her hat askew, her eyes jaded and glittering. When she encountered Philip's cold scrutiny, she sauntered toward her bureau, indifference to his mood evident in the swing of hip and shoulder.

"Where you been?" he demanded finally.

"Oh—dancing." Her tone carried no conviction.

"Do you know what time it is?"

"Yep."

Marjorie bent toward the mirror, smoothing out with a fingertip the wrinkles beneath her eyes.

"Margie,—this has got to stop," said Philip slowly. "There's going to be no more going out of nights."

His wife glanced at him with affected surprise, her brows elevated, in quick inspection, derision in a twisted lip.

Philip's hands trembled; slowly and ponderously he pulled himself to his feet.

"It's going to stop, Margie,—you understand me?"

"Really?" The inflection she gave the word was biting.

"Yes,—*really.*"

"Well,——" She shrugged her shoulders indifferently, opened the closet door, arranged her hat on the shelf and hung her fur scarf on a hook. Then she passed into the bedroom and proceeded to undress.

Philip shut his teeth, and followed her.

"You got to answer me, Margie,—you got to say you'll do what I want. You're my wife—and you belong to me—and not to that gang of roughnecks. I never see you,—you never do one damn thing for either me or the kid,—you just do as you please. Now, I tell you you can't go on,—it's going to be the end between you and that crowd."

Marjorie had gone to the crib and was tucking the covers about the heavily sleeping baby. Without glancing at her husband, she raised a warning finger. "Ss-h, ss-h, you'll wake him!"

That she, who so flagrantly neglected their child, should warn him,—should caution *him* not to disturb the baby!

Philip's big body grew suddenly rigid and he went white to the lips. For an instant he stood with tight-shut jaws and hands, then with a swift motion he made one step toward his wife and took her wrist. He dragged her into the outer room, closing the bedroom door behind him.

"Now—now—you little—little d-devil!—you listen to me," he said through clenched teeth. "I'm your husband and you can't treat me as though I was a door-mat under your feet. You hear me? I'm no door-mat. You gotta pay me some respect. I'm no door-mat under your feet!"

It was the first time in their lives he had ever laid hand upon her. Now as she faced him, her eyes flamed with hot anger, her cheeks blazed.

"H-how dare you?" she screamed at him. "I'll do just as I like,—do you hear?—just as I like! If you think I'm going

› spend all my nights with a big stupid fool like you, you got nother guess coming. You bore me to death,—*bore me to death,*— › you hear? What you got—what you do to amuse me, I like › know? You've never a pleasant word for your wife,—you never ike her anywhere,—you never got two nickels in your pocket to ib against each other. . . ."

"Stop—stop!" Philip cried, jerking her arm. "Shut your——"

"I won't—I won't! I'll say what I please and *go* where I ease and *do* what I please."

"We'll see about that!"

"I'd like to see you stop me."

"I'll stop you all right—you—you damned girl! You got › heart—you got nothing but your own selfish body!"

"Let me go—let go my hand——"

"I'll show you——"

"Let go——"

Suddenly she ducked; there was a flash of cheek, a quick otion of the black head, and she sank her small teeth deep into e flesh of his hand below the thumb.

§ 4.

Wilbur, familiar with the personnel of the *Colonial Insurance d Indemnity Company,* raised the bridge in the counter that vided the front office, and without a word or nod to anyone, ade his eager way past the bent backs of the plodding clerks gh on their twisting stools, to Philip's desk beyond.

"Phil—Phil," he whispered intensely, "we've got it! They ve us the lease! We own a ninety-nine year lease on the corner Market and Fifth! And Phil, the first thing I heard,"— ilbur chuckled in his enjoyment,—"was old Andrew Paris' sec- tary telephoning me to know when I could come up and see his ief on an important matter!"

Philip smiled back, appreciatively, in answer to the joy in his iend's face, but he was only conscious of distaste and a great eariness.

"Calder asked me about it first off this morning. He wanted

to know who *you* were. I guess he thought you were a financi king or something. I told him you were a friend of mine wh had lots of cash. He asked me what I was going to do with th corner and I told him I didn't know, but I lied, Phil; I got all planned out. Meet me for lunch, and I'll tell you all abo it."

Even Philip's enthusiasm was stirred as Wilbur across th luncheon table described to him how far he had progressed i his plans. There were four big concerns whom he had alread interested in taking over the lease upon the erection of a suitab building, and an acquaintance, an excellent architect, was at wo on the plans. A score of propositions were waiting, by any o of which Wilbur and Philip could withdraw from the deal, si over their lease, and show a profit on the transaction the propo tions of which promised to stagger them.

"God, Phil, let's put this money into a real estate partnershi —you and me, Phil,—'Baldwin & Lansing,'—big sign,—an offi down on Post Street,—what do you say? You can handle th office end, insurance, you know, and renting, and I'll do the hu tling on the outside. I'm going to quit working for somebody els —and you're going to, too. Let's go after the business togeth I *know* we can pull it off big! . . . Gosh! Life's moving too fa for me these days, Phil. I got a letter from Lucy this mornin Wants me to come up there this week-end! . . . Why, good Lor man! do you realize I'm going to be married in three weeks!"

Wilbur, absorbed in the sudden proximity of his wedding an his wealth, failed to hear Philip's next slow words until some su conscious fillip in his brain made him suddenly rivet his attentio upon his friend and demand sharply:

"What d'you say, Phil?"

"I said," his friend repeated wearily, "I said Margie and I have had a row. She's left me, quit me. She's living with a frien —Virginia Fisher. Says she wants a divorce . . . I hope to G she means it!"

Wilbur was more familiar with Philip's unhappy marital exis ence than the latter was aware. He listened now to Philip's slo recital of the estrangement between himself and his wife, wi close attention and sympathetic nods of the head.

"I was awfully mad, Wilbur," Philip said, the painful recol-tion bringing a dark, ugly shadow to his face. "I didn't know at I was doing. She bit me,—bit me here,"—he showed the ed hand,—"and I hit her,—the pain in my hand was some-ng terrible. She went down like a limp bag, but when I ked her up, she was all right—only kind of white and ghastly king. I thought she was dazed, but by and by she got up and nt over to the closet and got her hat and coat, went out of the m and down the stairs, and out of the hotel, and that's the last e seen of her. Of course I know where she is. But the next I knew there was going to be trouble, so I thought I'd beat to it, and I took Paul over to Constance in Piedmont and left n with her. . . . That's a week ago and I've never had a rd from her except that she wants a divorce. Oh, I wrote her told her I was sorry; I *am* sorry. No man's got a right to a woman no matter what she's done. I didn't want her to be e to say I'd never said I was sorry. I feel rotten about *that,* , my God, Wilbur, I'm through with *her.* There's no use my ing to make a go of it with that woman. We hate each other; k of it!—we *hate* each other. It's wrong to go on living h anyone you hate as I do Marjorie. . . . It's only money, ney, money with her and having a good time. She won't put self out the tiniest bit to do anything either for me or the kid. r sister, Constance, knows all about it,—she knows what a ish little beast she is. I'm not going to pay out another t for *her* support. I'll send Connie fifty a month to look after kid and I'll board some cheap place. But you listen to me, bur: I'm *through* with Margie. My patience is worn out. can go to the devil!"

§ 5.

Wilbur and Lucy were married on the last day of May. The e Episcopal Church in Vacaville was prettily decorated with and pink hawthorn blossoms and all the old friends of the Bald-s packed the pews. Wilbur's feeble old aunt made the journey

up from San Francisco successfully and was affectionately w
comed.

As the words of the service were impressively intoned by
white-haired, ruddy-faced Reverend Clement Gould, who had b
Rector of Epiphany Church in Vacaville since the Baldwin chil
had attended its first Sunday School, Philip could not keep
mind from wandering to his own wedding, with the noon whis
and the whir of the coffee-mill in the grocery below sounding
discordant accompaniment to the clergyman's voice, Marjori
uncertain accents, his own aching head and dry mouth, the ov
powering smell of lilies in the close room.

As he listened, now, the words of the marriage service i
pressed him for the first time with their solemn significance.

". . . for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickn
and in health, to love and to cherish, till death do us part."

It was ridiculous, of course,—ridiculous to presume after
way Marjorie had treated him . . . why, she didn't understand
couldn't understand any more the nature of the promise she h
made than a child in arms,—than little Paul in his crib!

Philip glanced at his sister. He wondered if *she* understo
He studied her radiant face, so rapt, so confident, so credulo
her golden hair gleaming through the filigree of white lace, h
girlish purity, her sweet innocence. What could she know
what she was promising so readily? Would Wilbur love her, co
fort her, honor and keep her in sickness and in health as lo
as he should live? Would he keep that promise any better th
he had himself?

Philip shook his head impatiently. The marriage service w
all wrong, absurd,—iniquitous. Nobody could be expected to ca
out so preposterous an agreement; he did not believe it w
intended that anybody should.

§ 6.

Rosemary could not come to the wedding. She expected h
first child at any moment, and indeed before Philip's brief st

s over the baby was born, a fine sturdy boy, the image of his her. Harry himself, whom Philip had not seen for some time, med changed to his brother. It was no more than a vague pression, hardly worth mentioning, as he explained to his mother er.

"He's just a little crude, Ma,—kind of noisy and says the ong thing,—puts his foot in it, you know. He's sloppy in the y he dresses, and why doesn't he have his hair cut?"

Mrs. Baldwin's mouth twisted into one of her rare, inscrutable iles.

"You mustn't forget *you're* changed too, Phil. You're dif- ent yourself. Harry's 'bout the same as he's always been. u're more impatient,—and more critical."

She sighed and a troubled look crossed her face; her son ised her disapproval.

"I don't like this talk of divorce, Phil," his mother continued. you and Marjorie cannot get along,—separate for a while. vorce is wrong unless it has God's sanction. Marjorie's been e to you and you have no right to put her away, or she you. u may think now, perhaps, that you made an unwise and unfor- ate selection when you married, but you will come together ain, Philip. I know human nature and I know if you have ience enough things like this always straighten themselves out, vided people don't rush off to the divorce court."

He put his arm about his mother's thin figure and hugged affectionately. He felt she was a little old-fashioned about h matters; she always read her Bible and accepted it literally. was not anxious for a divorce, anyway, but he was firm in his ermination never to live with Marjorie again.

§ 7.

He took occasion before he left Vacaville, to speak to his her about Dolores Mendoza. He had written immediately after visit to the Spanish woman's cottage and had given an accurate ount of what had transpired, but there had been no answer.

Father and son were sitting on the screened side-porch of the

old house and the fragrance of the budding honeysuckle hu thickly in the air. The Judge scratched his chin through the dy hair of his beard and cleared his throat raucously.

"You must understand, my boy, that one might say of th early days what the Scripture says about the resurrection, th there 'they neither marry nor are given in marriage but are the angels of God in heaven.' There was never any talk of ma riage between Dolores and myself. I can pledge you my word honor as a gentleman that she understood the relationship was last only while it was mutually agreeable. I am frank to conf to you there were other women, but there were never any er— recriminations, there was never any trouble. Dolores was the b of them, the least selfish. We lived in mutual respect, happin and esteem for ten years, and I have provided for her generous ever since. . . . It was a grief to me, a sad loss, to hear th she had passed away."

"And what about the daughter, Pa? How is she going to g along?"

"Puh—puh! There's a handsome life insurance—I don't kn how many thousands! She can live like a princess for a hundr years. I—er," he cleared his throat, "have more than discharg my obligations in that direction." He bent his beetling bro impressively upon his son.

"Your mother tells me that this young flibbertigibbet y insisted upon marrying is tired of her bargain and wants divorce?"

Philip nodded.

"She tells me you've given her no cause for reproach?"

"No," Philip sighed, "I guess it's just a case of not being ab to get along together."

"Humm—well, women are selfish,—the best of 'em; they wa the earth. They don't have enough to keep them busy and th get introspective, fanciful. A good wife's a busy one—alway When you marry again, pick out a woman that's willing to wor they're not so crotchety."

§ 8.

When Philip returned to San Francisco, he learned that Marorie had already instituted proceedings for a legal separation. He smiled contemptuously as he read her lawyer's letter; she sked a hundred dollars a month for herself and child. His lary, she well knew, was only a hundred and twenty-five. And e smiled again, but with irritation, at her demand for the custody the child,—little, neglected Paul, who meant no more to her an Virginia's lap dog.

The swift succession of events during the ensuing summer onths was bewildering. Most amazing of all was the successful rmination—far exceeding their expectations—of Wilbur's venre in the matter of the ninety-nine year lease. A day came hen this bold young speculator fluttered in Philip's face a certied check for thirty thousand dollars bearing the signature of alder & Stubbs, who had taken over the lease at that figure. enants eagerly awaited the construction of the building, a syndite of moneyed men was preparing to build. Philip protested ainst accepting his share of the check, asserting that it had been ilbur's idea, and that Wilbur's ability alone was responsible for e success of the deal, but his friend was deaf to his objections. e answered Philip with eager arguments in support of his plan launch out for themselves in the real estate business, each of em investing half their new wealth in the enterprise.

At last Philip was led to consider it seriously. The venture esented itself to him at a time when he could afford to take e risk; it offered him a new interest in life which he felt was eded; it provided him with an excuse for terminating his relans with the *Colonial Insurance Company,* and its pettifogging icials, in one and all of whom he had lost faith.

On Wilbur's advice he arranged an interview with Marjorie's torneys. What would Mrs. Baldwin be willing to accept in the rm of cash settlement, in lieu of alimony, provided he agreed to contest the divorce, but allowed her to obtain a separation on her own grounds? Wilbur pointed out to him that in his new dertaking, it would be wise to safeguard himself against the pos-

sibility of increasing demands on the part of his wife, and that a cash settlement, rather than alimony, would insure his independence. Philip saw the point. He wanted to be quit of Marjorie, to forget her, to close irrevocably that chapter of his life.

A derisive shout burst from him when Marjorie's attorney advised him that their client had carefully considered the matter and decided she would be willing to accept $20,000 in cash assuming the custody and care of the child. Philip indignantly stalked out of the office. It was not so much the exorbitant sum Marjorie demanded as her effrontery in asking for the custody of Paul. He knew she mentioned that only to anger him.

There were several exchanges of letters, various interviews, finally the matter was settled. Marjorie was to get ten thousand dollars outright, and her sister Constance was to have the custody of the boy, Philip providing for his maintenance until he was of age.

Philip persuaded old Phelan to go on his note to the bank again for two thousand five hundred dollars, added seven thousand five hundred,—half his share of the lucky real estate speculation,—and the petition for divorce went to court, and Marjorie was awarded an interlocutory decree on the grounds of "gross brutality and failure to provide."

"Let it go at that,—let her say anything she pleases, I don't care,—I don't care a snap of my fingers," Philip said fiercely. "I'm free,—that's all I want; I'm a free man again. Now, I don't give a damn what happens."

END OF BOOK I.

BRASS

Annul a marriage? 'Tis impossible!
Though ring about your neck be brass not gold,
Needs must it clasp, gangrene you all the same!

—*Robert Browning.*

BOOK II

BRASS

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CHAPTER I.

§ 1.

The offices of Baldwin & Lansing were humming with noisy activity. A group of impatient clients leaned against the barricading counter, waiting for one or the other of the distracted clerks to give them attention. The office was of good size, square and high-ceilinged, with large prismed windows in the rear disseminating light to the furthest corners. At one side stood a brief row of salesmen's desks, their names on small brass signs, neatly screwed to the edges: *Mr. Thomas, Mr. Cavalier, Mr. Cox.* There once had been, for a few months, a ferrety-eyed young man, named Joe Cavalier, who had worked for Baldwin & Lansing as a salesman, but "Mr. Thomas" and "Mr. Cox" were purely fictitious personages. The row of desks and the brass names had been Lansing's idea; he declared it gave an air of prosperity to the firm; it impressed callers, and particularly rivals in the real estate business.

Above the three desks in a redwood frame, the rough ragged bark still adhering, hung a large panoramic view of "Carlsbad-by-the-Sea," a new development, showing several houses in process of construction, lagoons being dredged, gas and sewer pipes being laid. There were other photographs: automobile picnic parties in a redwood grove, a new railroad station, mission style, the name conspicuous in large gilt letters, a gondola bedecked with roses, gliding through pond lilies, a caterpillar tractor breaking ground.

On the opposite side of the office was the renting department before which, just now, two old ladies in black and a wrinkled

little Irishman elbowed one another, all talking at once to a flustered clerk who nervously examined and re-examined a long thumb-worn card file. More photographs adorned this wall: a man parting gigantic corn stalks, two laughing children peering from a heap of oranges, a row of cows standing knee-deep in a willow-shaded stream. On a large square table in the middle of the office were arranged neat stacks of colored folders and circulars, and between these were small piles of corn-ears, sample bags of beans and dry alfalfa, enormous walnuts, a pyramid of dried prunes, and ornamental glass jars containing large preserved pears and peaches. Typewriters clicked; young women, with paper cuffs about their wrists and protecting sheets of paper pinned to their shirt-waist fronts, moved busily about, conferring with one another, laughing, talking, dangling in their hands important-looking legal documents with alarming carelessness. Between the two glassed-in private offices, before a desk obliterated under a wild confusion of papers, sat the office manager, Mr. Benjamin J. Sharp,—known to his employers and familiar associates as "Benny." A visitor sat at his elbow, two clerks waited to speak to him; every minute or two the telephone interrupted him.

"Miss Josephs—Miss Josephs," he bawled, the receiver clapped to his ear, "we got that Kennedy deed back from the Title Company yet? . . . Attorney's waiting for it . . ." Then back to the telephone: "Be over this afternoon, Mr. Eaton. Sorry you've been held up . . . What did you say? . . . Well, I'll have to refer that to Mr. Baldwin. . . . He's in a conference just now; can't be disturbed. . . . Yes, I'll write you."

§ 2.

Philip sat smoking a cigar, comfortably settled in a large leather chair in Lansing's office. Two years had made noticeable changes in him. He was just twenty-nine years old, but the last vestige of boyhood and adolescence had vanished. His face was graver, more set, fuller, and he frowned more readily. He was heavier, too; a faint suggestion in his girth implied an inclination to paunchiness. But he was far more presentable and imposing

than when he had arrived in San Francisco, a raw boy from the country. Now he was carefully groomed; shoes, clothes, scarf and shirt were correct and good; he gave the impression of spending more time and thought on the quality of cloth in his suits than to their cut or finish. His personality suggested maturity, judgment, reliability; his very deliberateness, the clumsy manipulation of his feet and hands, conveyed conservatism, sound and cautious thinking. Wilbur Lansing told his wife he believed Philip's deliberateness had grown upon him, that he cultivated it, and he was not altogether mistaken. Philip had discovered it was a great help to him: frequently his tardiness in committing himself had pulled him out of a hole, saved him from blunders, and effectively impressed a banker or client. But to those who knew him intimately this habit was frequently intensely annoying.

Wilbur had changed even more than his partner during the two years since his marriage. There were a number of fine criss-cross lines beneath his eyes, his forehead had developed a tendency to wrinkle in deep furrows, he twisted his mouth a great deal, and had acquired a nervous habit of pressing his lips together tightly, driving the blood out of them, making a hard white line of his mouth. There was a fine enthusiasm in his eyes, and when the pupils lit up with the ready fire in them, his momentary eagerness was infectious, irresistible. There was an extraordinary likable quality about him. He had a white, clean, smooth face, a generous smile, always on tap for the barest of acquaintances, a genial manner, flattering and heartening. His warm smile with the flash of even white teeth was partly nervousness, partly cultivated. For six months, Philip was aware, Wilbur had gone weekly to a dentist in order to achieve this display of dental symmetry. He maintained the ivory perfection of his teeth, despite the innumerable cigars he smoked, by periodic visits to the dentist for pumice scourings. There was hardly a moment in the day when there was not a cigar in the corner of his mouth, and invariably they were of the cheapest variety. Philip, who thoroughly enjoyed a good cigar, wondered at Wilbur's satisfaction in them.

Philip was thinking of this peculiar preference of his partner that very morning as, comfortably ensconced in his armchair, he idly watched Wilbur through the drifting blue smoke of the excel-

lent Havana he himself was enjoying,—watched him draw his cigar-case from his pocket, mechanically offer it to the other occupants of the room before selecting one of the long black weeds himself. The others were Alex Calder, Banning, the secretary of Calder & Stubbs, and Termini, an attorney. In turn they had addressed themselves to Philip, pleaded with him, reasoned with him, pointed out again and again the advantages of the proposition they all were eager in persuading him to endorse.

Philip smoked on placidly, thinking about his partner, telling himself that Wilbur was really a remarkably clever fellow. Long ago he had made up his mind as to his decision in the matter urged upon him. He was opposed to the scheme; it was against his business principles, but he let them talk on, deriving a certain satisfaction in withholding his opinion as long as possible. Wilbur, watching him narrowly, suspected he was enjoying himself.

"Say 'Yes' or 'No,' Phil, . . . there's no sense in wasting Mr. Calder's time if your mind's made up. If you won't consider our going into this deal,—won't let us get the prestige nor the profit,—say so. . . . Your mind's made up; *say* something!"

Philip slowly took his cigar from between his lips and regarded its smoking tip reflectively. Calder opened his mouth to voice a fresh argument, but Lansing checked him with an uplifted hand; they all gazed expectantly at Philip. He was aware the moment had come when he must declare himself, yet a perverseness of which he was not wholly conscious held him silent for some moments longer. When finally he spoke, it was with great deliberateness, a slight pause between each word: the scheme was entirely speculative, it was too big a risk, it involved obligating the firm to another big loan, and he was definitely opposed to it.

Calder expressed his disappointment with an impatient "tut" of the tongue, Banning spat irritably into the waste-basket, Lansing rose with a slight shrug of the shoulders, his mind instantly turning to other matters. Philip rose, too, ponderously, and made his way to the office door. With his hand upon the knob, he nodded to Calder and the others, then turned a moment toward his partner.

"Lunching, to-day?"

Lansing covered his eyes a moment with his hand, concentrated, before he flashed Philip one of his bright glittering smiles.

"Sure, . . . I'll be with you. Twelve-thirty!"

§ 3.

They usually lunched at *Marchand's* where a little table against the wall was reserved for them until one o'clock. It was the only chance they had for private talk, as there was rarely an opportunity during the hurly-burly of office hours.

"I think you made a big mistake, to-day," Wilbur said as they settled into their places at the table. "The Ericson ranch will be a famous tract one of these days . . . Tuolumne County's got a big future."

"Well,—perhaps you're right,—perhaps you're right," Philip answered, reflectively, in measured tones. "We've gone ahead tremendously fast in the last two years. People down on Montgomery Street are all talking about our luck and our success. I don't want to run too many big risks,—that's all. We're growing fast enough; the business is going to get bigger and bigger each year after the start we've had. Another loan is *another loan,* and I'm not a bit sure of the value of that land."

"That's the bank's risk," Wilbur exclaimed impatiently.

"And what about our credit with the bank?"

Wilbur shrugged his shoulders.

"Yes," Philip continued, nodding knowingly, "it was the bank's risk with that Alameda tract, I suppose. I kept our name and the firm's money out of that. Lord knows what loss you took!"

"Six thousand, three hundred," Wilbur replied promptly.

"Well!" Philip exclaimed, his tone indicating his vindication.

"And how much did the firm lose," Wilbur rejoined, "in not sinking its money on that asparagus island in the Sacramento? I guess I lost money on that!"

Philip shook his head.

"It may even up, Wilbur. But my plan is surer. You and I don't agree on the way we ought to do business. I can't see

that it's wise to take these big gambling chances. We can mak money,—a comfortable growing business income,—from legitimat commissions on what we buy and sell, and I think we ought to stic to that."

"And be like Frederick Noble & Co., who've been doing busines in this town for twenty years and still have got no more than little hole in the wall down on Sansome Street!"

"Well, they're still doing business, aren't they? And durin the twenty years they've been in business, there's been a bunc of small fry like you and me that have gone to the wall,—jus remember *that!*"

Wilbur frowned, nervously jingling his fork and spoon.

"It only makes me impatient sometimes," he confessed hesitat ingly but with earnestness in his voice, "these picayune methods they're too damned slow. I want to make thousands instead o hundreds!"

"You'd have thought what you draw down now a month a might big income a couple of years ago."

Wilbur laughed.

"Well, that's true,—but, good gracious! Phil, I want to be *rich*,— I want a *bunch* of money. I want Lucy to have everything in th world she can possibly desire."

"Lucy's *got* everything she wants right now."

"Maybe,—but she'll be wanting a lot of other things whe she's older: pearls and furs and trips abroad, you know."

Philip growled inarticulately and humped his big shoulders.

"Have you heard from her lately?"

"Got a letter this morning. She's fine,—says your father better, but it's awfully hard on both him and your mother sinc the Japs got the ranch. Lucy says the Judge declares he's gla his sciatica keeps him indoors as he could never face his cronie down in the village after all he's said about the Japs, and rentin out ranches to them on a share-and-share basis."

"It was the only thing for Pa and Ma to do, they couldn get anybody to pick the fruit. It was rotting on the trees."

"Lucy says just seeing the Japs 'round the house upsets th Judge so much that your mother's thinking of moving him int Vacaville next year, and perhaps renting or buying a house there.

Philip nodded approvingly.

"And—oh, yes!—say, what do you think? Rosemary's going have another baby! That'll be two. Let's see: the first was born st before Lucy and I were married."

"I remember," Philip said, smiling pleasantly over the news. Rosemary couldn't come to the wedding; she was expecting the d any minute. . . . Say, Wilbur,"—awkwardness suddenly tangled s words,—"aren't you—don't you—you and Lucy—aren't you ing to have any children?"

Wilbur assumed an artificial smile.

"I dun-no," he said quickly, uncomfortably. "Maybe . . . some y."

There was a fraction of a moment's embarrassed silence, then th began speaking at once.

"'Scuse me—*you* go ahead."

"Well, I was just wondering when Lucy was coming back. She's en up at the ranch for about three months, hasn't she?"

Wilbur nodded.

"I guess she'll be down in a week or so."

"You were going to say something," Philip prompted.

Wilbur's countenance lighted. At once he was all alertness, ger enthusiasm. He pushed his plate with the remains of his lf-eaten luncheon to one side, whipped out a sharp-pointed pencil, pped over the menu, and with pencil poised in his fingers, said pressively:

"I believe, Philip, the time's come when we can afford,—have t to afford,—an automobile for the business. Now I want you to ten to me closely. Last month we took in in commissions, sales cetera . . ."

The sharp-pointed pencil began to figure.

§ 4.

Wilbur and Lucy had made their home since their marriage at *Hotel Pleasanton,* an old-fashioned comfortable caravansary in heart of the city where a number of old ladies and old gentlemen, l a few large families, gossiped, thrived and had their being.

It was an eminently respectable family hotel, the largest and mo pretentious in the city. Lucy had been taken sick on her hone moon, had been a week in bed in Los Angeles, and returned to th ranch in Vacaville to recuperate. When she had rejoined her hu band at the end of a month, they had taken up their residen at the *Pleasanton*. Old Doctor Forrest had thought her hardl strong enough to begin housekeeping at once, and so they ha decided in favor of the hotel.

His sister played the part of a bride charmingly, Philip thought she was so young, so innocent, so sweet, so altogether lovely. Ma riage had contributed a hint of gentle quietness, of reserve an womanly dignity, which Philip noticed in her bearing, in her fac She was no longer a school-girl playing with her dolls, or skippin rope; she was a wife, and in her courageous assumption of the rôle, somehow it *seemed* courageous with her,—and in the self-sufficien way she bore herself as Wilbur's bride, her brother found somethin that tugged sharply at his heart, and brought a smart to his eye He kept reminding himself she was only seventeen! He did no know why he felt sorry for her; she appeared happy and contente a great favorite at the hotel, with matrons smiling approval o her, and elderly gentlemen patting her hand affectionately. Mr Perry Hoyt and old Mrs. Tom Carmichael both regarded her as protégée, and took her with them to their clubs, introduced her t their friends, maintaining a small rivalry in their social launchin of "pretty Mrs. Lansing."

The number of Lucy's acquaintances in the city grew surpri ingly. She went to numerous women's luncheons and teas, an played a timid hand at bridge-whist, which had begun to be th vogue. In the mornings she meandered downtown to leave glov at the cleaner's, to pick out a new book at the library, to indulg herself in a box of chocolates. Often she met an acquaintance wh carried her off to luncheon, persuaded her to go to the matin and to tea, or inveigled her into further shopping expedition Women immediately took to Lucy, spoiled her, petted her. Me stared at her, stopped and gazed after her in the street, or at soci gatherings, when she was introduced to them, held her hand, an looking with bold admiration into her eyes, tried to flirt with he But Lucy did not know how to flirt, and failed to be interested

hese attentions. She did not fancy men, much preferring her own ex. She liked to be dressed fashionably and knowingly, and she nade these efforts to please the feminine, not the masculine eye. She was the type that does not awaken jealousy in other women, lespite her prettiness, and Lucy delighted in their praise and lattery.

The Lansings were invited out a good deal, but Wilbur was ored by social affairs. Frequently they interfered with work at he office, or he would be too much fatigued at the end of the day o think with any pleasure of attiring himself in a stiff shirt and ormal evening dress; but rather than disappoint his pretty wife, rhose marked popularity pleased him, he fortified himself occaionally with several cocktails, and made the necessary effort. When usiness was not pressing, he infinitely preferred to spend an evening vith Lucy, first over what he described as a "snappy" dinner of ysters and thick broiled steak with plenty of French fried potaoes, at some gay downtown restaurant, and later on to go to the *Orpheum,* stopping for a stein or two of good German beer and a arebit on the way home.

Both he and his wife were much interested in the new home hey had begun to build a year and a half after their marriage, nd which was now fast approaching completion. Situated far ut on Washington Street, it commanded a fine view of the Presidio, he Bay, and the humped purple shoulder of Tamalpais. Wilbur ad bought the lot for practically nothing at a foreclosure sale, nd the house was to be of clinkered brick, with dark-stained redvood trimmings, and a gabled roof. Philip had no idea how he nanaged to afford so pretentious a home. He frequently found ccasion to wonder where the money came from that Wilbur spent o freely. He knew it was not drawn out of the business. All rofits, commissions and so forth went back into the firm's exhequer to be used as working capital. The partners paid themelves three hundred dollars a month, but there was never a month, Philip knew, when Wilbur did not overdraw his account by more han twice this sum. Once a year he paid it all back in a lump. His brother-in-law had a score of irons in the fire about which Philip knew little. Every proposition that attracted Lansing conained a big element of chance; the bigger the gamble the keener

his interest. Some months after his marriage he had tried t persuade Philip to join him in the purchase of an asparagus islan in the Sacramento River. The deal involved one hundred an seventy thousand dollars. Philip refused; the figures frightene him. But Wilbur had gone ahead, borrowed money from Calde borrowed money from the bank, persuaded the manager of th *Pleasanton* to lend him a couple of thousand, and, carrying a tre mendous mortgage, he had bought the island, to sell it triumphantl in less than a month for nearly twenty thousand dollars more tha he paid for it. Besides real estate, he dabbled in stocks, finance a café out on the Beach, took shares in small mining and tradin companies, invested a few hundreds here and there to help pu on the market a patented gas burner, a device for cleaning windows or a new kind of high tension electric switch. As often as he coul manage it he went over to Emeryville on Saturday afternoons an played the races. He even bought tickets in Chinese lotteries.

"I believe in the law of averages, Phil," he would declare i defense of his methods. "Some of these chickens are bound t come home to roost."

So far as Philip could see his theory was perfectly sound Some of them *did* come home to roost and laid handsome golde eggs; others proved outrageously expensive, but of these Wilbu never spoke.

Lansing was loud in his championship of Eugene Schmitz, th city's mayor, whom the labor party had put into office, and of Ab Ruef, the political labor boss, who was the power behind th throne.

"Say what you like about Schmitz," Wilbur would challeng with a thump of his fist to emphasize his words, "you can ge things *done* in this town to-day. There's none of this hemmin and hawing! Ruef's never turned down your Uncle Dudley ye and I've had to go to him with a lot of things. I'll vote fo him and his candidate as long as I can stagger to the polls!"

§ 5.

Philip had taken up his abode with a number of young me who managed a club-house for themselves known as the *Abbe*

They were exceptionally nice fellows, young doctors, dentists, lawyers, college youths cutting their eye-teeth in the business world. There was no hard and fast set of rules governing the club, no definite requirements for membership, yet a fine spirit of good-fellowship prevailed. Philip grew thoroughly to enjoy his life at the *Abbey*. There were great round tables in the basement dining-room about which the talk swept fast and with some brilliance. There were pleasant banter and ready laughter, too, in the lounging room upstairs, where a card game was generally in progress, or someone would be knocking the balls about the billiard table. In a corner stood an array of new magazines, and a mechanical piano contributed, too readily, a syncopated jangle to the general hum and babble. There was always someone with whom to talk, always something to read, always quiet and solitude to be found in one's own room.

On Sundays Philip made a point of dining with Lucy and Wilbur at the *Pleasanton Hotel*. The chef made a supreme effort on his particular evening, and the results of his exertions were carefully chronicled in type on a gilt, embossed menu card. The guests of the hotel dressed formally on this occasion, but Wilbur, Philip and a few other men declined to conform to the custom. They said it was putting on a lot of unnecessary "dog," and refused to be parties to such futile ostentation. Lucy, on the other hand, took great delight in wearing her prettiest frocks. She loved the brief lull in the murmur of voices, the slight craning of necks, the sibilant whispers which followed her entrance into the dining-room. She was beautiful, there was no denying the fact, and Philip was proud of the mild sensation her radiant loveliness infallibly created.

Often he found himself speculating on what Wilbur really thought of his wife. He himself loved his little sister so ardently, he sometimes felt that her husband took her a great deal for granted. Lucy was rare, exquisite, a rosebud,—delicate, tender, bewitching. The man to whom she surrendered her youth and beauty was to be envied of all the world. Yet Wilbur frequently gave his brother-in-law the impression that he was somewhat indifferent to his wife's charms. Not that his love for her could be questioned. He was continually showering her with gifts, urging her to buy

new hats, new dresses, new furs; there was nothing, he asserted, "too good" for her. But the tones of his voice had little affectionate modulation; he rarely expressed his love, and never, so far as Philip observed, indulged in a caress. Lucy reflected his manner, seemed to accept him in much the same cool, dispassionate way. "They're undemonstrative," her brother said to himself, and he finally concluded they preferred to keep their love-making to themselves. He recalled Lucy had once proclaimed in her mid-teens that a husband and wife who kissed or held hands in public were "perfectly disgusting." She had been exceptionally vehement upon the subject.

Philip habitually over-ate at these Sunday feasts. A steady procession of gaily garnished, lukewarm viands appeared, and were rapidly whisked away. The diners were conscious of a mysterious influence that subtly urged them to lose no time over the repast: more courses were to follow; there must be no dilly-dallying over any one of them.

Long before the end of the dinner was in sight Wilbur usually begged to be excused to go upstairs for his longed-for cigar. Philip and his sister would finish the meal together, idling over nuts and raisins, fruit and black coffee, talking over old days on the ranch. They enjoyed this hour together and liked to prolong it, for besides the pleasure of being left to their idle murmuring, both were aware that a row of hotel dowagers, and little timid white-haired old ladies lay in wait just outside the dining-room door to pounce on Lucy as soon as she appeared. Everyone liked young Mrs. Lansing, and those who had had guests were anxious their friends, who had admired her unusual beauty during dinner, should have the pleasure of meeting her. Though it was a bit of an ordeal, Lucy enjoyed the crowding about her, the admiring smiles, the flood of compliments. Philip would stay on the outskirts of the group, ill-at-ease, but with a determined good-natured smile upon his face, patiently waiting until his sister, after declining urgent invitations to remain for the concert by the hotel orchestra, should make her escape and join him where he always stationed himself, by the elevator door.

"Running the gantlet," Philip and Lucy called it, and they joked one another about it a good deal.

During one of these Sunday evening trials, Philip was attracted by an unusually interesting and singularly beautiful face. It belonged to a girl of twenty-six or twenty-seven, rather tall, with a fine stately carriage. Something in her quiet repose, in her downcast glance, in the simple attitude of patient waiting and graceful ease, drew and held his attention. Her evening gown was of white satin, the drapery hanging loosely in beautiful lines about her tall, statutesque figure. Folds of white satin crossed at her breast, and the soft material was gathered by plain gold clasps at the shoulders. Neck and arms were marble-smooth and white, superbly sculptured. Her face was pale, the delicate skin unblemished, but a slight color, faintly pink, touched her cheeks; the brows were dark, well defined, and beautifully shaped, the nose a trifle heavy, the mouth sensitive, tender, surprisingly gentle, and the broad white forehead was capped by a turban of brown wavy hair, that was softly undulating, lustrous like burnished silk, amber-toned. It was an intellectual face, strongly spiritual, strangely wistful. This last quality first piqued Philip's interest into something more than passing fancy. He had admired her classic beauty, her simple pose and fine carriage, but it was not until she raised her eyes to disclose their dark glory that he caught the haunting wistfulness of her expression.

The memory of it stayed with him all week and he hunted for a glimpse of her on the next Sunday evening among the others in the dining-room. She was at a table not far away, seated with her mother, a sweet-faced, placid little lady with white hair which showed a line of pink scalp where it was parted, and with pendent tremulous cheeks that shook gently when she spoke. The girl wore the same white satin gown, and seemed to Philip even more superbly lovely than his remembrance of her. He was conscious of a disinclination to speak to Lucy about her, and was not in the least curious to find out who she was. He was satisfied to watch her. She fascinated him; he could not keep his eyes from her face; he had never encountered a woman whose mere sight of whom so deeply stirred him.

When she and her mother had finished their dinner, and had risen preparatory to leaving the dining-room, Philip saw, with a sudden pounding of the heart, that they would pass within

arm's reach of him. He bent over his plate, pretending to be engrossed in excavating the interior of a walnut. The blood roared in his ears, he felt his face flame hotly. Lucy nodded to the ladies casually as they passed, with one of the polite little smiles she bestowed on all acquaintances in the hotel, but Philip only bent lower over his plate.

Later in the crowded hall, outside the dining-room, he caught sight of the girl again. It seemed a characteristic pose for her to stand with downcast eyes and lightly clasped fingers when she was not speaking. Her elderly mother was evidently a garrulous soul, but the girl stood patiently at her side, her face suddenly lightening with a pleasant warm expression if she were addressed. But she herself, Philip noticed, volunteered few comments.

He could not drive this girl from his thoughts. He saw her face in his cigar smoke, in the darkness that companionably became his when he switched off the light in his small bedroom, in wonderful dreams that pleasantly stole upon him in his sleep. Something in the face of every young girl who passed him in the street oddly suggested her. He was obsessed with an hallucination that this or that woman was she. Frequently he caught himself turning around to satisfy himself he had been mistaken.

The following Sunday he spent the entire afternoon over his toilet, soaking in his bath, studying his clothes, deliberating over the color of his scarf. At the last moment he telephoned Lucy he could not come: he had developed a bad headache. But an hour later, declaring he had taken some bromo and felt much better, he joined his sister and brother-in-law over the tail-end of their dinner.

It was inevitable he should meet her. Wilbur introduced him to her one Sunday evening. He told Philip he wanted him to meet a "real, stunning girl," one that he considered a "corker." Philip immediately knew whom he meant, and flushed at the familiarity in tone; dumbly he allowed his partner to pilot him across the hotel foyer to where she stood.

Her name was Rowland,—Mary Rowland,—and she had only recently returned from England, where she had lived many years

and where she had been educated. But she was a Californian, she declared with a grave smile and a touch of pride; she and her mother had at last come "home." She talked directly, without affectation or feminine artifice, raising her dark eyes occasionally to gaze frankly into the face of the person addressed. Her voice was low, a little husky, charmingly English. Philip, at the moment of introduction, felt suffocated with embarrassment. Hands, neck and forehead were covered with a fine moisture, his face burned, his tongue grew thick and leathery, his feet seemed suddenly enormous, to weigh a ton. But when her dark eyes held his, and she smiled in so friendly a fashion, placing her small hand in his damp palm with simple directness, his constraint left him as completely as if from his shoulders there had suddenly dropped a mantle. He found himself presently talking easily to her without self-consciousness, and when Wilbur left them he turned about quite unconcernedly, and strolled with her a little way apart from the noisy groups that filled the wide hotel foyer.

She was a type with which Philip was unfamiliar; he had known women only of small stature heretofore. His mother, Lucy and Marjorie were all short, but Mary Rowland was tall, within a few inches of his own height. She was full-throated and full-bosomed; her arms were big, round and smooth; she was generously made, classic, statuesque. Intellectually she was far above him; she was a student, a musician, a thinker.

Philip was fascinated. He forgot himself, forgot his big hands and feet, forgot to feel conspicuous. It was amazing to find himself laughing and talking with her, completely at his ease. Presently when he caught sight of Wilbur and Lucy looking for him as they were about to ascend in the elevator, he managed a light wave of the hand in their direction, indicating he would join them by and by. Never in his life had he been so free from absurd embarrassment in the presence of a woman, and it seemed to him he had never talked so well. They discussed California, a new book by Kipling just published called "The Five Nations," Dowie's invasion of New York City, Panama's two-day revolution from Colombia, and the election of Pius X, the new Pope. The orchestra interrupted their talk. Philip restively held his peace, studying the fine-cut profile, the splendid sweep of chin and throat,

the thoughtful dark eyes under the heavy lashed lids, the linked fingers. When the music ceased and the perfunctory applause died away, Miss Rowland turned to him again with a fresh smile of interest, but at the moment her mother came to claim her. At once she rose and put an arm about the frail shoulders.

"Yes, Mother," she said cheerfully, huskily, "I'm quite ready, —really quite ready. . . . Oh, no!—It's *past* nine. . . ." She turned to Philip: "Good-night,—we meet soon again—I hope?"

He bowed and tried to return the cordiality of her smile. As she moved slowly toward the elevator, her bare arm about her gentle mother's figure, splendidly indifferent to the appraising study of the old ladies of the hotel, Philip thought he had never seen a woman so superb, so divinely beautiful, so gloriously regal.

Lucy and Wilbur were waiting for him in their room upstairs. As he came in, his sister fixed her eye upon him, studying his face, an amused smile upon her lips.

"Well,—Philip! Whence this sudden interest in the female sex? Our shrinking violet no longer dreads the sun's hot rays!"

Wilbur gave a short laugh.

"Beautiful Minerva's got him going!"

Philip felt the blood rushing to his face. He blushed violently, hotly, his eyes swimming with confusion.

"Why, Philip! . . . *Why, Philip!*" exclaimed his sister, surprised at his emotion. "I do believe the man's in love!"

§ 6.

Was he? He asked himself the question repeatedly during days and nights that followed, but could satisfy himself with no definite answer. He had supposed Marjorie possessed all the love he could ever give a woman; he supposed that part of him to be dead, that he could never love again. But it was not long before he was asking himself if the emotion he had entertained for his wife was to be compared with that which now disturbed him. Had he ever really loved Marjorie? Was that old feeling anything more than calf love masquerading as something more enduring? He had been no more than a boy, and she a little girl whom he

ad considered roguish and cunning. They had not known the *eaning* of love! How could they?

Marjorie had married Roy North almost immediately after the ear of waiting made necessary by the interlocutory decree, and hilip had been told that North had taken her to New York here he had obtained a job as a cartoonist on an evening newspaper. illian had been disposed of somehow; Philip did not know the etails. He wondered if Marjorie had found in North the man e really loved, the one for whom she should have waited? If er first choice in husbands had been a mistake, might she not have hosen more wisely the second time, and be playing the rôle of ife with greater success? Philip wished her no harm; he honestly oped North would bring her the happiness she had not been able o find with him. All the hurt pride, the bitterness and anger that urnt in his heart for two years, had disappeared. This new oftening toward his late wife had come about only since he had nown Mary Rowland. If Marjorie could find her real happiness ith Roy North, why could he not find his own with Mary Rowland? hat was there to prevent him from re-marrying? He was free. hat obstacle was there? Why should he not aspire to win this comparable woman? Perhaps after all she was the woman it as intended he should marry,—his natural mate!—his true wife!

The thought brought him to his feet, his jaws gripped, his sts tight shut, his big chest rising on a great breath. *God!* hat a woman! What a marriage!

§ 7.

He sent her flowers the next day, a fragrant box of violets nd lilies-of-the-valley, and the day following he dared to call. e was relieved to find her out, for his nerve had forsaken him. e could do no more without encouragement from her, and tried to mpose his soul to wait with patience.

But he could think of nothing else. At night he dreamed of er; the first conscious thought when he awoke concerned her; her istful eyes, her spiritual face, the long splendid lines of her gracious gure haunted him. He thought of her as he lay in bed, as he

slowly dressed, as he stared unseeing at the newspaper propped against the water-bottle at the breakfast table, as he walked down town to his office in the glittering sunshine, as he settled himself at his desk and impatiently scattered the neat stack of personal mail that awaited him over his desk-blotter, the mad hope asserting itself that among the envelopes there might be one from her. He could not fasten his mind to his work. The thought of the usual morning hour given to laborious dictation sickened him. He directed the telephone girl to break several business appointments. He could not bear to keep any of them.

He would stare unseeing out of the one window in his office at the gray brick wall of the opposite building, and attempt to conjure up against its slaty background the tall figure in satin draperies with downcast eyes and linked fingers. Moments of uncontrollable impatience possessed him. He would stand up suddenly, jerking back the heavy-armed desk chair, his fingers gripping it with whitened knuckles. He would pace the few feet between the glass partitions of his office, back and forth, back and forth, back and forth, his great hands shoved deep into his trousers' pockets, rolling a cigar between his big teeth, his forehead knit into a constant scowl.

When the fifth morning of the week brought no word from her, he was in a fine state of irritable impatience. For an hour he flung himself from chair to chair in his small prison, and restlessly measured its brief dimensions with big strides. The tones of Wilbur's buoyant, cheerful voice engaged in dictation, filtering through the glass partitions, played havoc with him. He groaned, seized his hat, and sought the glaring sunshine of the windy streets, where he gazed into florists', booksellers', and jewellers' windows, conjecturing whether she would like this or that, speculating as to what would be appropriate, what his selection might be, should he dare to send her another gift. Acquaintances who hailed him in the streets got only an unsmiling nod in return. He bought himself a drink in a saloon, and whiled away half-an-hour in an amusement booth on Market Street where for a nickel graphophones reeled out music through rubber ear-tubes, and colored transparencies seen through stereopticon eyepieces succeeded one another in tedious rotation. The morning seemed endless.

The word from her, so impatiently awaited, arrived ultimately n the form of a brief note of thanks for the flowers, and included in invitation to join her mother and herself at tea Sunday fternoon.

To kill the intervening hours, Philip took himself to Piedmont o see Constance and Paul. He had not been over to his sister-in-aw's house for some months, but his visit was a disappointment. Constance irritated him with her tritely phrased inquiries about is welfare; she asked him again and again how he was getting n, and it seemed to him he was obliged to tell her a hundred imes that his health was excellent, his business growing, and he as living comfortably at the *Abbey*. He decided marriage had nade Constance tiresome, commonplace. Nor did he find any articular satisfaction in Paul, an unresponsive, shy child, who acked against his aunt's knees, eyed him suspiciously, and turned rebellious back to his clumsy overtures.

"He ain't well, Phil," Constance explained. "It's his stomach. I ot to be awful careful. Stan says I'm *too* careful. . . ."

In the elfish, little face with its close-set eyes and elongated ose Philip could see only a diminutive caricature of his late mother-n-law. He wanted to be friendly, to have Paul turn to him with ffection, but he was at a loss to know how to accomplish it. The hild's shy mistrust increased the father's ill-humor, and disgusted ith his own sourness, Philip took an early leave.

At a loss to know what to do with himself, he made an excur-ion to Berkeley in the late afternoon, to watch the gridiron prac-se, and went back to the city with the thought that the new eneration of college youth played football in a spiritless, lady-ke fashion, a travesty on the old gruelling contests of his day. n the evening he bought a single ticket for the *Orpheum*, and sat hrough the vaudeville entertainment without a laugh or a moment's elaxation.

Sunday broke dully, and seemed endless. The morning papers isgusted him, his cigar tasted bitter, the club fellows at the *Abbey* ot upon his nerves. His thoughts left him no peace. One face aunted him, one name sounded in his ears.

But when he kept his appointment late in the afternoon, and he stood before him, serene and beautiful, the agitation that had

swept him throughout the week vanished. He found himsel calmly collecting his thoughts, as he held her white fingers in hi and looked into her glorious eyes without a tremor. It seemed t him as if this splendid woman reached down to him when he wa with her, and lifted him up to stand beside her on her own exalte plane. She appeared to have no artifices, no feminine devices. Sh was unaffected, straightforward, singularly honest, making hi forget she was a woman while they talked, so that he was conscious only of perfect companionship.

The room in which Mary Rowland and her mother receive him was unlike any Philip had ever entered. A large corner of i was occupied by the black-cased grand piano whose ebony lustr was partly concealed by an old, frayed piece of curtain that onc had hung in the palaces of the Doges. Its crimson and gold embroidered texture was cluttered with piles of opera scores, son albums, and tattered sheet music. Heavy furniture, satin bro caded, and tufted tapestry were huddled back-to-back, shove against the crowded table, or in front of the doors of the glas cabinet stocked with miniature ornaments and china. On one sid the room was filled with low book shelves their contents spillin over, curtained with more of the rich stuff that draped the piano Above the book shelves, crowding the wall spaces, was a heterc geneous collection of pictures: reproductions of paintings b Burne-Jones, Abbey's murals from the Boston Public Library,— photographs of Browning and Carlyle, the Brontë sisters, Richar Wagner, Sir Henry Irving,—and a heavily framed oil copy of th Sistine Madonna. Upon the book-case itself stood a bust o Beethoven, a Della Robbia plaque, a Florentine oil lamp, a woo carving of the Lion of Lucerne, a small seven-branched bras candlestick, and a plaster-cast of a Greek frieze of dancin nymphs. In the embrasure of the window was placed the lo tea-table with a shiny brass kettle emitting faint scarves o vapory steam, and surrounded by a variegated assortment of cup Through the half-opened door that led into the back bedroon Philip caught a glimpse of a canopied bed, and in the corner small shrine with a silver crucifix and a china conch for hol water, before which waved the dim flame of a wax taper, aflo in oil.

Mary Rowland wore a robe of gray silk, gathered at the waist by a knotted silver rope, the ends of which, heavily tasselled, hung to her feet. Lace rippled about her neck and fell in rich cascades from her throat and elbows. It was in no sense a conventional costume, but it suited her admirably, Philip thought. The white skin of her round forearms through the delicate mesh of the faintly yellow lace, the flashing hands, the long supple fingers busy with cups and spoons, fascinated him. He had never beheld anything so beautiful, and his frank admiration was too apparent to pass unnoticed. His hostess laughed.

"You find tea-making so interesting, Mr. Baldwin?"

"The way *you* do it!"

"There is nothing mysterious about it," she said, a smile lingering in the corners of her mouth. "Mother and I try to manage a cup every afternoon. . . . Do you take lemon?"

Philip had never heard of the substitute for cream, and showed his uncertainty. Ordinarily he would have been confused, but he found it extraordinarily easy to be frank with this wonderful woman. She, herself, and everything about her were so immeasurably above him, there was no need for pretense. Simplicity as unaffected as her own alone would rouse her interest.

"I don't know much about anything, Miss Rowland," he confessed. "I'm from the country, you know, and I've never been any place outside of Sacramento, Vacaville and here. We've got a fruit ranch up in Vacaville—and that's my home."

He told her about the Judge and his mother and about the orchards in Pleasant Valley, while he balanced a tea-cup on his broad knee, and gingerly held a thin slice of cake between his big fingers. Again he marvelled at the readiness with which words came to him, at his facility in expressing himself. Her apparent interest made it easy. Even the frail, white-haired mother declared she had let her tea grow cold listening, and begged for a fresh cup. Philip told them about the rush of the summer months, the race with the ripening fruit, the problem of labor shortage, and the overshadowing Japanese menace that was driving the native American grower out of the fruit-growing business. He told about himself, the educational opportunities the Vacaville High School had afforded, his brief months at the University of California, his pref-

erence for city life, his successful business venture with his brother-in-law.

"And I guess that's about all there is about me, Miss Rowland," he finished with a laugh. "Except that I've got a hankering for all this," he waved his big hand toward the walls and about the room. "These things mean something," he continued earnestly; "I know that, and I know it would take years and years to learn about 'em,—but it isn't as though I didn't care."

He caught the girl's eyes studying his face, and blushed redly, his old self-consciousness momentarily returning.

"You think it all unattainable, Mr. Baldwin," she said intensely, "but it *isn't* so! . . . All literature, all poetry, all music may be yours for the asking. You've *got* the only thing that's essential, the key to unlock the doors of the treasury: the desire to know,—the love,—the urge! It's those who don't care who are hopeless!"

"I'm afraid it's too late to begin," he said dubiously.

"That's never true of anything!"

"I shouldn't know how or where to go about it."

"Surely that's not a difficulty; I'll be glad to show you."

Philip's face lighted up with eagerness.

"You mean you'll tell me what I ought to read and let me come up here and talk things over with you?"

"Yes—certainly."

Philip laughed one of his noisy outbursts.

"That would be great, Miss Rowland,—that would be great. You'd be my teacher, wouldn't you? And I tell you what: I'll be the best little pupil you ever had!"

Their gay mirth mingled. Philip turned to the forgotten old lady, but Mrs. Rowland had disappeared. He saw her shadow moving about in the bedroom.

"Miss Rowland,—how often can I have a lesson? . . . I'm going after this thing awfully hard . . . I'm going to study like blazes. I don't want to become a nuisance."

The girl shook her head slowly in amusement.

"We'll see how fast you progress. . . . Now, just what have you read? You spoke of Kipling the other evening?"

"I've always read his poetry since I was a kid up in Vacaville

nd there was a copy of 'Plain Tales from the Hills' that an old iend of my father's sent him from England years ago."

"Well, now,—let's see." She rose from the tea-table and went kneel by the book-case, running her finger-tip over the titles of me of the volumes. "We ought to make it interesting for you at rst," she said. "I believe it will be really a great deal of fun, if ou're truly in earnest. I shall try to plan out a proper course of struction. . . . Have you read 'Vanity Fair' or 'David Copper-ld?'"

"They're by Dickens, aren't they?"

"Thackeray wrote 'Vanity Fair.'"

"We were supposed to read 'The Newcomes' in High School, t I didn't get very far with it. I guess I skipped a good deal. ve read 'Oliver Twist,' and I've started 'David Copperfield' two three times, but I never got any further than where his aunt akes a knife or something at him and says 'Go 'way boy, no ys allowed here!'"

Miss Rowland laughed.

"Well, we'll begin with 'David Copperfield' and 'Vanity Fair.' wish *I* could have the pleasure of reading them for the first ne! And you must have poetry, too." She picked out a volume Keats' verse, and a small leather-bound play of Shakespeare's.

"'The Taming of the Shrew' is not one of his greatest," she id, skimming the pages of the little volume, "but it is a good one begin with. We'll go on to the tragedies by-and-by."

"I hope this doesn't frighten you," she continued, putting the ur books in Philip's hands. "They look rather formidable."

"They seem just about right to me for a starter. But I'm glad u didn't give me more, because that would mean it would be too ng before I could come for my next lesson."

"You don't have to wait until you finish them for that," she d, amused, but at once her face was serious again, and she owned thoughtfully. "I don't know just where to begin with sic. . . . However I'll sing something for you first, and then I'll to play for you."

She sat down at the piano and opened a book of Schubert's gs.

The music meant nothing to Philip. He was conscious only of

the lovely picture she made, the white column of her soft rou throat, her beautiful tapering arms, her white fingers. At on he recognized her voice had been carefully trained. The not poured liquidly from her mouth in mellow phrases. When sh finished, the admiration in his face was far more eloquent than an thing he might have said. She was pleased, and sang again f him: "In a Persian Garden" and a song by Hugo Wolf. The she played for him: Mozart and Mendelssohn.

The music itself left Philip cold. It bored him though he tri to follow it. He would have preferred to have had her talk to hi but he would not let her suspect this, and was vehement in his prais He saw she liked it. Evidently music meant a great deal her.

They were interrupted by her mother.

She was sorry to stop the music, sorry to break in upon the talk, but it was nearly seven and if Mary was to dress . . They closed the dining-room doors at eight . . . Both glanced at th clock and Philip rose hastily, full of apologies, but his hoste reassured him.

"No—no, Mr. Baldwin,—dinners we have every day, but go talks like this afternoon's are not so frequent. I had no idea of th time myself. You mustn't feel apologetic; I shouldn't have had any other way for the world."

He took himself away, without delay, the four books tuck beneath his arm, happier, he said to himself, than ever before his life.

CHAPTER II.

§ 1.

The days flew by. Philip flung himself into the reading and udy Mary Rowland laid out for him with an enthusiasm which oon evolved into dogged determination. He went at his books uch as he would have tackled a job of ploughing or the fall prun-g. It was work, and he could not bring himself to regard it as ıything else. He read half the night and frequently until the early orning hours, measuring his progress by the number of pages he ompleted. There was a great deal his eye followed word by word, at was unintelligible to him, but he refused to skip; that would ave been cheating, and not fair to Mary. Laboriously he plodded ı, sometimes marking a difficult bit of verse to discuss with her ter, sometimes copying out passages in long-hand hoping to get the meaning for himself. He began to like Keats after Mary ıd explained to him the first poems he attempted to understand. e responded eagerly to her suggestions as to methods of study. Digging," he described it, and Mary said that was just the word. Then one dug down after the thought beneath the language, the eauty, the reward, was always there. Wordsworth, Tennyson and e music of Swinburne's rhythmical measures delighted him. Mil-n and Bryant, whose translations of the Odyssey and Iliad he boriously digested, proved more formidable. Browning was an igma, until Mary read him aloud, illuminating the text with the ıances of her marvellous voice, rich with modulation and lovely ıskiness.

Their progress with music was slower. Mary Rowland had for any years studied her piano and voice cultivation. She had sac-ficed much for her music. After three years at the Boston Con-rvatory, she had gone to England, and for additional instruction d spent a year in Dresden where she had worked with Aglaja rgeni until her health,—which had not been good,—had brought

her mother and herself back to California. She struggled hard t awaken Philip's appreciation for music, which interested her mor than literature. She would shake her head at him and hold u her hands in pretended despair, but she never quite gave up hop There were arias in "Carmen" and in Thomas' "Mignon," he thoug he liked, but could never divorce the music from the singer's per sonality. There was one song however that did stir his pulse. I was called "Amoureuse" and he could honestly say he enjoyed i He begged her frequently to sing it, but when she complied it wa always with reluctance.

"I'm sorry I ever sang that song for you, Mr. Baldwin. The were singing it in Paris when we were there. It's not music tha endures,—it's 'popular';—and the words—well, I'm rather glad yo don't understand them!"

"But, Miss Rowland! You sing it *wonderfully!*"

And she did. She sang it so that it thrilled Philip as no musi had ever thrilled him. He did not know the meaning of th words, but he did not need even the hint given by the title of th song to know that it was about love. Love,—love,—love! Th music was full of it, throbbing with it, seductive, caressing. Th muscles in his throat contracted, as he listened, the blood beat in hi temples, a giddiness affected his senses. Mary frankly told hi she disliked to sing the song because of its obvious effect upo him.

There was an excellent Italian opera company performing at th *Tivoli Opera House* at this time, and frequently the two went t hear it. A buxom diva, by name Collamarini, with a God-give voice and a fine sense of the dramatic, romped through "Carmen and had won for herself much deserved popularity. Another prim favorite was a giant baritone, Salassa, whose golden tones arouse even Philip's phlegmatic enthusiasm. Mary read Philip the librett of the opera before the performance, and played and sang some o the arias. He enjoyed these evenings immensely.

She herself sang regularly in the choir at old St. Mary's o California Street, and Philip frequently attended Mass on Sunda morning, and waited patiently through the long ritual to hear th voice he had come to know so well,—the beloved tones that rose clea and sure above the rest.

There was much in the beauty and solemnity of the stately serv-ce, as he grew familiar with it, that stirred his neglected spiritual motions. Mary Rowland appealed to a side of his nature long gnored. After he outgrew old Dermot Phelan's Sunday school lass in Vacaville's little Episcopal church, and had encountered the onstraint that comes to every boy in discussing religious matters ven with his mother, he had given little thought to the subject. Ie could not recall ever talking religion with Marjorie. Mrs. ones had been a frank unbeliever. She never missed a chance to rand as hypocrites any professed Christians in whom she saw vidences of inconsistency, and used vehemently to declare she would ever set foot across the threshold of a church. Mary revived hilip's early religious thoughts and faith. She and her mother ere devout Catholics and both were eager to make a convert of im. Old Mrs. Rowland would worry him by long talks, in which ie prodded him with embarrassing questions regarding his religious eliefs, and she held forth tirelessly in theological discourse which hilip vaguely felt she had memorized from a book. Mary's religious ervor, her goodness and piety made a deep impression upon him, nd he had several intimate talks with her. She made him want to e good, to live a decent, unselfish life; she made him want to be s she was, spiritual, high-minded, pure.

§ 2.

Philip was conscious of a growing estrangement between himself nd his sister, Lucy, which distressed him in no small degree. He new that Mary Rowland was the cause, and the unfriendly attitude ucy elected to adopt toward her annoyed him vastly. She had ssumed the same hostile manner with Marjorie, although not for ie same reason. It had been a little girl's jealousy then, but now was frankly a lack of sympathy in her brother's admiration for liss Rowland. Philip could not fathom his sister. He was at a ss to account for her antipathy toward the girl he had grown love so dearly, who seemed to him the possessor of every virtue the world, a woman the very thought of whom, as his wife, should ave delighted Lucy. Mary was cultured, refined, broad in sym-

pathies, and had a wonderful mind. She had had unusual experiences, she had travelled, she was a woman of the world. Lucy should have been proud to know her, should have tried to cultivate an intimacy with her for her own sake, if not for Philip's.

Lucy was at first inclined to treat his enthusiasm for Miss Rowland with light airiness. She poked a little fun at both himself and the lady, and even went so far as to dare an imitation. She affected an outrageous representation of Mary's superb carriage, struck an exaggerated attitude, and huskily demanded of her brother which among the pre-Raphaelite poets was his favorite. Wilbur shouted his amusement, but Philip was offended. His sister had learnt from childhood to respect the dark red flush that sometimes flooded his face, and she changed her method. She substituted a milder form of raillery, calling him "Romeo" and "Lochinvar," and inquired when they met, if the course of true love was running its proverbial turbulent course. From the letter Philip received from Vacaville, he saw that his sister had deliberately given his mother a false impression of Mary. He had confided in no one his reverence, his admiration, his love, not even to his mother. But the drift of his affections had been no secret from his sister, and Lucy promptly wrote home in detail. Mrs. Baldwin's letters were couched in cautious terms: Lucy had mentioned the new interest that had come into his life, . . . she hoped her son would consider well before taking a step fraught with grave consequences, . . . he had had one unfortunate experience, she hoped he would think long and carefully before he again became entangled with somebody unsuited to him and thus lay himself open to fresh sorrow. She admonished him he had no right to re-marry, and in conclusion reminded him that he was his father's son, implying that where women were concerned his judgment was not to be trusted.

That Mary Rowland should be looked at askance by his mother and sister irritated Philip vastly. Lucy was the tale-bearer, the person who had poisoned his mother's mind against the most wonderful woman in the world! His mother and sister assumed that Mary was only too eager to marry him! *Mary!* whose finger-tip he was not fit to kiss! He was a country bumpkin, and his mother and Lucy were the mother and sister of a country bumpkin. Wh

ere *they* to sit in judgment of Mary Rowland? Who were *they* speak of entangling alliances? Resentment against his sister rned hot. He found excellent reasons for not dining with her d Wilbur on Sunday nights.

The completion of the Lansings' house and their early depart- e from the hotel made his determined evasion less apparent than might otherwise have been. He went to see them in their new me, admired its hardwood floors and the gray eucalyptus finish doors and windows, the conveniently arranged rooms, and the o high marble mantels that Wilbur had bought so cheaply at auction, and came away, sadly realizing that his disenchant- ent with Lucy had reached a point at which his enthusiasm had en forced, and she was aware of it. When Mrs. Wilbur Lansing t out cards for her first "At Home," and prepared to launch rself and her husband formally into the social waters of San ancisco under the guiding auspices and jealous rivalry of Mrs. rry Hoyt and old Mrs. Tom Carmichael, her brother found an cuse not to go.

He preferred to spend the afternoon with Mary, poking over musty volumes in an old book-store he had discovered on Mis- n Street. Mary, her gloves streaked from handling the contents the dusty shelves, was rewarded by finding a copy of the first ition of Christina Rossetti's poems, and Philip acquired a worn t handsome calf-bound copy of an anthology of English verse l six volumes of "The Letters of Junius" which Mary urged n to read. With their treasures beneath their arms, the two lied out into windy Mission Street to discover that the after- on light was fading, and it was getting late. Philip wanted the l to have tea downtown with him before going home. They re both tired and the cars would be crowded at that hour. It uld be much pleasanter to rest and smoke and talk over their a-cups for a little while. They were passing a cheap little staurant, hardly more than a lunch-room, whose front windows re in glaring white letters of script across its glazed expanse the me: *John's*. Through the window and doorway could be seen double row of bare-topped tables, arranged symmetrically with tlery, and tumblers from which blossomed colored Japanese pe napkins.

"I'll go in here, Philip," Mary said by way of compromise, indicating the almost deserted lunch-room, "I'm too tired to walk any further, though it would be really wiser to go back to the hotel."

Philip had a vision of white-haired Mrs. Rowland tiptoeing around them, fiddling with cup and spoon, fussily settling herself, and drinking her tea birdlike and with audible hisps.

"Come on, then, let's see what kind of a place this is," he said quickly. "The tea probably will be acid strong, but we'll have a chance to talk and rest a bit."

He guided Mary to a table in the dim region at the rear, and they were rewarded by excellent tea in glazed earthenware pots and hot buttered toast, thick but freshly made. Another of their delightful half hours that were becoming of almost daily occurrence ensued, for Philip telephoned regularly every morning, and if Mary was coming downtown he managed to leave his office long enough to meet her at the library or in a book-store or wherever her errand took her, and if the hour in any way justified it he would persuade her to lunch with him or have tea.

"There is something so luscious and musical about this man," Mary said. She had picked up Philip's recent purchase, the Keats volume, and was glancing from page to page in it. "Listen to this: 'Lucent syrops, tinct with cinnamon.' Isn't that delicious? It makes you feel hungry, doesn't it?"

Philip smiled appreciatively.

"I've always thought those opening lines in *The Eve of St. Agnes,*" she continued, "froze one to the bone with their suggestion of cold." She read:

> "Ah, bitter chill it was!
> The owl, for all his feathers, was a-cold;
> The hare limp'd trembling through the frozen grass,
> And silent was the flock in woolly fold."

"Burrr," said Philip. "It makes you actually shiver; that's genius, isn't it?"

He remembered the lines in his reading, and was pleased that their beauty had not escaped him. What perfect companionship he enjoyed with this woman! What ecstasy could be theirs, if

she with her great and glorious soul, her magnificent self, her gifted mind, could be persuaded to listen to the passionate plea which was at that very moment trembling on his lips!

There was a crash,—a sudden ugly diversion!

In another part of the restaurant a child and its mother had been having an early supper. There had been an accident, something had been spilled and there was a clatter of broken crockery, the harsh rasp of shoved chairs and the strident voice of the woman, who slapped the little boy angrily, and wiped his stained shirt and trousers with crumpled napkins, scolding in a high shrill voice, drowning out his bitter howls with louder cries. Impatiently, she jerked his small arms into his street coat, crammed his hat upon his head and, after struggling into her own wraps, dragged him by the arm, stumbling and blubbering, to the cashier to whom she explained as she paid her check that the child was "just a little imp" and she "couldn't do a *thing* with him."

The little lunch-room seemed suddenly hushed after their clamor. Mary began slowly to manipulate her long white fingers into the snugness of her soiled gloves, preparing to depart.

"That sort of thing seems so unnecessary," she said with an expression of distaste. "It upsets me,—makes me actually ill. . . . Dreadful people! It's lack of discipline, that's all. Neither that mother nor child knows the meaning of the word. Such exhibitions shouldn't be allowed in public. . . . I suppose it's the chance one takes wandering into such queer places. . . . But the tea and toast *were* good, weren't they?"

But Philip was not listening. He was thinking of Santa Cruz, and the noisy group in the Casino, the screaming women, the boisterous young men, Jimmy Fisher shouting orders for more drinks and a shrill voice beside him, asking him if he did not think Marjorie looked a lot like Maude Adams.

The woman with the sobbing little boy had been Lillian North.

§ 3.

He knew that Mary as well as her mother guessed his secret,—if secret it had ever been. The fervor in his eyes as he gazed into her face would have proclaimed it loudly even to an indif-

ferent observer. He had no thought to hide it. He confessed it in every way he dared. If she saw his love and permitted it, was it not reasonable to believe it was not unacceptable to her? Thus he tried to encourage himself, but in the same moment with this thought there rushed upon him an overwhelming sense of his inferiority. She belonged to Olympus and he was of the earth; she was a divinity, he a churl. She could not,—it was unthinkable that she should ever come to like him,—to care for him! He dared not voice a word that even remotely suggested love.

And yet week succeeded week, and day by day they saw each other, and as if this intimacy did not suffice, they wrote to one another, generally at bed-time, evidence that the last waking thought of each was of the other. Philip trod on air, and Mary welcomed his companionship, and laughed and forgot her cool dignity and self-repression. Their friendship was enough, more than he deserved, Philip constantly reminded himself. Why risk what was so precious by a stupid declaration?

"I love you, Mary, with all my soul. . . . Can you love me? . . . Will you be my wife?"

The significant words found their way inevitably to his lips, despite his fine determinations. Passion swept him off his feet. His strong arms took her gracious person tenderly into the big circle of their embrace, and, as she sank toward him, trembling a little in the moment of surrender, he caught her to him with a choking, inarticulate glad cry, and crushed her lips to his.

It was all too wonderful, too tremendous! Mary, the spiritual, the high-minded, the student and musician, had seemed sufficiently marvellous, but Mary, the woman,—so soft, so yielding, so tender, who rested her head upon his shoulder and laid her cheek to his, her white arms about his neck, while happily, unashamedly confessing her love for him,—choked him with tumultuous emotion.

"I've always loved you, Philip," she said proudly; "it doesn't seem to me there ever was a time when you were not a part of my life, for I've only begun to live since I've known you. . . . No, no, Philip! You must not—*cannot* say such things about yourself. I'll not have it! . . . Any woman would be proud of such a man; you're so clean and fine and big! . . . My goodness, but

you're a powerful giant! . . . You—you overwhelm me! . . . you take my breath away!"

"Mary,—you wonderful woman! I—I can't believe it! I don't deserve such happiness,—I'm so unworthy!"

She put a white hand across his mouth. He kissed it eagerly, pressing it to his lips;—then, taking her in his arms again, he strained her to him, gripping her close, hugging her to him blindly, desperately, until she cried out with pain. She was his,—she was to be his wife,—she, Mary Rowland, loved him,—she was everlastingly and eternally his!

He wanted to proclaim the glad news to the wide world; everyone must know! He flung his arms out toward the starlit sky on his way home that night, and filled the great capacity of his lungs to their bursting point, expelling the air in a shout of laughter. He was drunk with happiness. For sheer joy he ran down the steep hills at a mad pace, catching himself from bad spills, now and then, by a frantic clutch at a friendly gate-post or iron fence railing. At the *Abbey*, he found sedate Doctor Glass reading a medical treatise by the light of the electrics over the billiard table. He tipped the Doctor out of his chair, picked him up bodily by leg and arm, and carried him, kicking and squirming, to the lounge across the room, where he flung him, laughing hilariously at his victim's protests. As he fled down the long hall to his own room, he banged upon each door he passed, and locking his own door behind him, yelled derisively back at the angry threats that filled the hallway.

§ 4.

Three days of extravagant joy were his,—three days of intimate whisperings,—three days of halcyon hope and plans. And then on Sunday morning, walking home with the woman he loved from old St. Mary's after Mass, he mentioned Paul.

"He's growing up into a fine boy, Mary,—strong and healthy. His aunt's accomplished that for him. We couldn't take him away, you know, after what she's done. It would be too cruel, but we'll have him for long visits, and you'll like him——"

"Philip! You have a boy—a son——!"

"Yes,—he's five years old now; lives with his aunt, Mrs. Trevor, over in Piedmont. I thought you knew."

"You've been *married,* Philip,—you've been *married before.*" The note of utter surprise in her voice, surprised him in turn

"Why, of course,—Mary,—I thought you knew."

"But why haven't you told me,—why haven't you mentioned it?"

"I thought you knew," he repeated lamely. "It isn't a thing I like to talk about. I've never discussed it with anyone,—except my sister-in-law. I've never even spoken about it to my mother."

"But, Philip—we've been so close to one another,—we've confided so much,—you know all there is about *me,*—and since—these last few days—! I don't understand . . ."

"I've been so happy—so wonderfully happy with you, that I didn't like to go back to old times, I suppose."

"When—when did you lose your wife, Phil?" she asked, her tone low and troubled.

"It's two years—it's nearly three years, now. We were divorced in——"

"*Divorced!*" There was horror in the word.

"Yes,—I'll tell you all about it, Mary. I'll tell you the whole wretched story and you shall judge which one of us was to blame. . . . You mustn't take it so, sweetheart. It was not *my* fault. There was nothing . . . I tried every way I could."

"Yes,—yes,—of course,—of course you did," Mary said in a pained half-voice, but Philip knew she was not thinking of her words, but only of the hurt he had given her. They had reached the hotel and neither spoke again until they had gone upstairs to the little room of books and pictures and treasures where they had passed so many perfect hours.

Mrs. Rowland had a heavy cold, and was in bed, and after Mary had kissed her mother's tremulous cheek and put away her hat and cape, she joined Philip in the outer room, shut the door carefully behind her, and pushing back her hair with a quick gesture of determined composure, straightening her shoulders, she settled herself in one of the big chairs, and squarely met his troubled gaze.

"Now let's have the truth," she said firmly.

Philip told his story, haltingly, miserably, striving to stick to the sequence of events, trying to recite it all impartially, recounting Marjorie's complaints, as well as his own. He dared not look at his listener. He knew she was crying. He could see the white flutter of her handkerchief. He tried not to spare himself in his narrative, nor to palliate any of its most unpleasant phases, only when he reached the last scene of all did he falter. His jaw trembled, his hands, the fingers interlocked, gripped each other until the pain of the terrific squeeze steadied him. He could not bring himself to tell Mary Rowland that Marjorie had bit him and that he had struck her! The words would not come out of his throat. He disposed of the scene briefly.

"She left me then,—that was all. She just walked out and went to the house of a friend—and I was glad, I was *thankful* to see her go. We had nothing in common, not even a tattered shred of the old attraction that first drew us together. We never really loved each other. Neither of us had the capacity to love when we married. We grew to hate each other,—despise each other,—there wasn't any use going on."

He stopped and a long silence followed, until he finally found courage to glance at her. She sat, staring blankly into the cold light of the window, her face set, tear-marks streaking her white cheeks.

"Perhaps you see, now, Mary, why I haven't mentioned that part of my life to you before. I find no satisfaction in remembering it. I hate to remind myself of all the bitter thoughts, all the ugly things I used to think about. There was still bitterness in my heart when I first met you. I deliberately cherished a hatred of Marjorie as something I owed myself, and—and Paul. But you changed all that for me. You showed me the uselessness of it. I couldn't love you and go on hating anybody; love drove the hate away. And after it had gone, it seemed an ugly thing to speak of, or to remember. I tried to forget everything connected with it. You were so wonderfully pure and good I held back from telling you what was ugly or unpleasant about myself. It wasn't that I wanted to deceive you. It just never occurred to me that that old affair, which is all past and gone, could possibly make any difference to you,—or to us. I had put it out of

my life, and Marjorie had married again. The only link with the past was little old Paul, and he's too small to make any difference. . . . Mary, you *do* believe that I had no intention of deceiving you? Mary,—say that you believe me. I could not bear it, Mary, if you thought I had not been square with you from the very first. Mary,—say that you believe me."

Clumsily, awkwardly, he got down upon his knees and knelt beside her chair, reaching for her white hand. For a moment she attempted to evade him, then relinquished it and left it cold and passive in his hot clasp. Presently he began to talk again, going over his story, justifying himself, arguing, pleading, repeating himself over and over, but he could coax no word from her. Occasionally her eyelids fluttered, and she drew a quivering breath, but otherwise she remained motionless, fixing her gaze steadily into the white glare from the window.

Philip wore himself out. He had said everything there was to be said, and realized he was talking to deaf ears. He rose and sat near her, and together they remained so for a long time.

A faint complaining voice from the next room finally roused the girl. She quitted Philip in answer to the summons and it was a long time before she returned to shut the door of the bedroom gently behind her, and, with back set against it and her eyes fixed upon the floor, to deliver herself of a speech obviously rehearsed.

"You must allow me sufficient time to think this over, Philip. It is a grave matter; I need reflection. You will do me a favor by going now and leaving me to think. I will write you,—perhaps to-night, or to-morrow. It will be as soon as possible."

"But, Mary, I can't—you mustn't expect me——"

"Please,—I beg of you."

"Mary,—Mary,—don't send me away,—let me stay—there is something else——"

"I *beg* of you."

The slight trembling in her voice found its way to his heart. He could not stand before its ring of weakness, of supplication. Blindly he found his hat, blindly found the hotel corridor, blindly found the street with its sharp dusty wind, its trundling cable-cars, its deserted Sabbath stillness and dreary emptiness.

§ 5.

Her letter reached him two days later.

"My dear Philip: Our marriage cannot be solemnized. I have consulted my spiritual adviser, Father Gregory, and my duty has been clearly pointed out. You must know that the Catholic Church stands unalterably opposed to divorce, and refuses to sanction a marriage between persons, one of whom has been divorced. Your own church is nearly as strict in this matter, and you would find few Episcopal clergymen and even few ministers of other denominations, who would be willing to perform the ceremony of marriage between you and any woman. Our Lord expressly and unequivocally states what should be our guidance in this matter, and even should I disregard the commands of my own Church, I should find no authority which would justify my marriage with you. Your oath, taken before God, binds you to your wife until death do you part, and whether right or wrong, I cannot see that any process of law warrants you breaking that oath.

"I have no reproaches to make, none are deserved. There is nothing to be said. I am willing to believe that you proceeded in ignorance, that there was no intention of deception. We must face the situation resolutely and seek fortitude from Heaven. I believe profoundly in the compassion of Almighty God, and am confident that His purpose will be made clear, and that we both will find comfort in taking our burdened hearts to Him.

"You will help me by making no further effort to see me or write me. While your wife lives there must be no further communication between us. Any effort on your part to shake my resolution would be a patent disregard of my earnest wish, only to be construed as a deliberate effort to tempt me to sin.

"I wish you every happiness, Philip, and hope that you will find comfort and consolation where they have been so freely promised.

"Your friend,

"Mary Rowland."

Philip was stunned. His mind refused to accept the fact that she had broken with him. He stared dully at her letter, read and re-read it, folded it carefully and put it in his pocket, then started out to walk, hardly knowing where he went,—walking, walking, walking. His steps led him to the Presidio, and he crossed the golf links, to follow the road out beyond the concealed forts. Down the steep hillside he scrambled through loose sand

and tough wind-blown brush, till he reached the strip of white beach with its pounding surf,—and here, flung out upon the sand, the scud flying in his face, tossing his wet hair, the breakers rolling thunderously toward him, flattening themselves thin, and rushing hissing across the interval that lay between, his grief overwhelmed him.

Night came on and the tide came in until its outermost rip licked his foot and wet his hand, driving him back against the cliff. After the scud, came the wet fog, blotting out sea and land, drenching the ground, filling the night. The fog-horn at Bolinas kept up a muffled intermittent bark; the light beyond the old fort occasionally punctured the darkness and fog with a feeble ray. Philip sat with head bowed upon locked hands. There was no loophole, no glimmer of hope, nothing but the bleakness of an empty life before him,—and the hunger and longing of his heart.

She had asked him to make no effort to see her, but she had asked more than was, for him, humanly possible. At first he avoided the hotel, but at last his feet were drawn inevitably toward it. It could harm no one to look up at her windows, to gather what satisfaction might lie in the thought that she was sitting there behind the curtains, perhaps, thinking of him, wishing for him? There might be a quick glimpse of her figure! Glancing out into the street, she might see him! And seeing him, she might relent! But the hotel presented its ugly exterior and Philip could not loiter indefinitely at the corner, gazing profitlessly at its gray, uncompromising front. He dare not go in. To ask for her would only bring a curt refusal, and show an utter disregard for her request. But the thought she might weaken, might relent, tortured him, and he lingered near, fearing, hoping to meet her as she chanced in or out.

As the days went by and he did not see her, he became persuaded she was ill, perhaps through longing for him, longing to have him take her in his arms and crush down her scruples with his love. He could not bear the uncertainty.

At the desk the clerk, who knew him well, glanced curiously at his unkempt appearance.

"Miss Rowland and her mother," he said, "left some days ago. I think they went to England. They asked me to telegraph

or steamer reservations for them. . . . They did not leave any orwarding address."

That was the end. She was gone. The episode was over. ut the wound,—the gaping, ugly wound, with its twisting, goad- ng pain,—remained.

CHAPTER III.

§ 1.

The idea of committing suicide Philip never entertained seriously, though he sometimes allowed himself to meditate upon easy and dramatic ways by which it could be accomplished. That Mary would never hear of it at all, or not until a long time after it had happened, robbed the gloomy speculation of any satisfaction. It would serve Lucy quite as she deserved, however, and it was some comfort to think of her self-reproach in the event of his self-destruction.

He decided, one morning, to pay a visit to Constance and his son. The pitiful hope that prompted him,—a hope he was far from acknowledging to himself,—was that he might learn that Marjorie was ailing, that she had been sick, and might die. He had never discussed his former wife with her sister. Her name was rarely mentioned between them, and he had not heard anything concerning her for a year or more.

The Key Route ferry system had just been inaugurated, and Philip decided to cross the bay on one of the new boats. As he bought his ticket at the ticket-window, and scooped the loose change into his palm, a familiar voice at his elbow made him turn about curiously. He recognized Mrs. Grotenberg.

They were both pleased at the encounter. Philip had not seen her for five years, and he greeted her warmly; he was glad to learn she was taking the same boat as himself. They had much to say to one another as they sat in the sunshine on the upper deck, watched the gulls circling in the wake of the boat, and listened to their strident cries like harsh squeaks of ungreased pulleys.

She was older, of course. There were crow's-feet at the eyes, and a little loose pouch of skin beneath the chin, but Philip thought her face was softer, somehow,—and gentler. Her magnifi-

ent eyes in their dark shadows suggested trouble and sickness. With his own sorrow and loneliness heavy upon him, he felt an impulse to take her hand as it lay beside him in its worn and shabby glove, and squeeze it sympathetically. As he studied her, it came to him that they two might find much comfort in one another. He noticed her cracked shoes and the frayed handle of the hand-bag she carried. The "Merry Widow" sailor she wore was of plain black straw, its edges chipped and broken. Life always had used her roughly, he remembered. He was full of solicitous inquiries.

She lived with a trained nurse and her small daughter in a little flat on Larkin Street. The daughter went to the Girls' High School and Mrs. Grotenberg took care of their tiny establishment and kept an eye on the child, while the mother came and went on her cases. During the rush hours at the Ferry Building she had a job at a newsstand, checking parcels. She was busy there in the early mornings and late afternoons while in her off hours she marketed and cooked meals for herself and the little girl.

"Come and see me, Phil," she urged, as they were about to separate for their different trains. "There is so much I want to hear about you, and all that has happened. Give my love to Constance and kiss your boy for me. Connie's a fine girl and I've always been awfully fond of her. . . . Phil—Phil!—it's been an age since those old days out there on Valencia Street! And how you've changed! You've grown into such a fine big feller, I'd hardly know you. . . . You *will* come, won't you? I'm *so* anxious for a good talk. . . . *Any* night,—I go out very little."

Philip promised. As he took his seat in the train that would carry him to Piedmont, he told himself he would truly enjoy seeing Mrs. Grotenberg again, and talking over old times with her.

Constance he found setting out spring flowers in her garden, Paul poking with a trowel industriously in the loose earth beside her, under the impression he was of help. He was not a pretty child, but he was uncommonly cunning in his diminutive overalls.

Philip sat on the steps in the sunshine, smoking, as he watched his sister-in-law at work with her limp, sagging little plants. Presently he found occasion to inquire about Marjorie.

"You know I've never heard a word, Connie,—since she went

away with Roy North. I used to feel sore about her, but I don't any more. What're they doing, and how's she getting along?"

Constance sat back on her heels, and rapped the bottom of a tiny red flower-pot she held, with the butt-end of her trowel.

"She doesn't write often, Phil. I ain't heard from her since Christmas. She sent Paul a stuffed rabbit, then, and I got a letter. Roy seems to be getting on all right. He's with a newspaper syndicate now, and I guess gets pretty good money. They've an apartment somewheres, where there's a lot of other artists and writers,—literary folks, you know,—nearby. Margie says she's having a grand time, and I guess she's happy. I'm sure I don't know. They go to the theatre a lot, she tells me, and she's crazy about New York. She's nothing but a child, Phil, and Mama spoiled her something fierce. I never thought she treated you right, and you know I told her so. I never liked Roy North and his crowd. . . . Stanley thinks Roy's no good. She had no *business* doing such a crazy thing as getting a divorce and then making trouble between Roy and his wife. . . . Makes me cross whenever I think of it!"

"We-ll," Philip said indifferently, "Marjorie never understood, somehow. She wanted, and 'll always want, a good time. . . . We were awfully hard up for money, Connie."

"Oh, Margie was spoilt all right. Mama never raised her right, and always gave her just what she wanted. *That* was the trouble. It wasn't the money. Why, Stanley and I never had any more 'an you and Margie when we started in. We just commenced saving from the very first. That was the difference,—and I tell you what, Phil, that's one pretty sure way young folks can take that's bound to make 'em happy and contented: no debt,—pay as you go and save wherever you can. Stanley says . . ."

Philip drew a little breath of weariness. When Constance commenced quoting her husband, there was no stopping her; it was her one weakness. Stanley Trevor's opinions were of small interest to him.

Paul provided a welcome interruption by successfully turning on a small hose-hydrant and deluging himself with a sudden gush of water. The unexpected torrent with its chilly temperature

frightened him, and he sat down abruptly with the spouting cascade playing in his lap, and howled. Constance rescued him, tucked his dripping figure under her arm, and bore him off to the house to be comforted and be put into dry things.

Philip was tempted to tell his sister-in-law about Mary. He wanted to unburden his heart to someone, and knew how interested and how sympathetic she would be. But the opportunity did not present itself. A neighbor called; Paul had to have his tub and be settled off for his nap; the vegetable wagon and the fish cart drove up in front of the house, and both were occasions for interruptions and protracted bargaining. Philip decided he would come over again on a Sunday or some other day soon and persuade Constance to go for a walk with him.

He spoke to her about Mrs. Grotenberg, however, and delivered her message. Constance commented at length.

"She's a funny woman. I never could quite make her out. She's good-hearted and all that, but she's double-faced. I can't stand a double-faced woman. You never know whether she's your friend or not. Mrs. G. treated Mama rotten. She owed her nearly three hundred dollars, and she told the most awful lies about her! 'Defamation of character,' Stanley called it, and he says that——"

Philip looked at his watch. There was just time to catch a boat. He kissed his sister-in-law hastily and departed.

Crossing the bay on the way home, he stood on the upper forward deck of the boat, and let the salt wind from the ocean, sweeping in through the Heads, blow fiercely in his face and through the hair of his bared head. It had suddenly grown cold. Fog was coming in and had blotted out the sun. The city looked gray and bleak; the muddy water of the bay had turned slate color. It was all desolate and dreary like his heart. There was no flavor in life; existence was but a miserable endurance. Mary had tricked him, deceived him, had flung away his love for a mere silly scruple. His anger momentarily burned hot against her,—then slowly died. What was the use of blaming Mary? The fault was not hers. She loved him,—he was sure of that,—she had sacrificed her own love as well as his. "Mary—Mary!" His heart cried out in fierce longing. Where was she? What was she

doing? . . . No,—she was not to blame. She saw her marriage to him as sin, and she never would have been happy with him, even if she had renounced her faith. Marjorie was well and enjoying herself. She would probably live to be as old as her mother. There was no use in hoping for freedom in that direction. He could not bring himself even to wish that she would die. Let her live, and get what she could out of life.

"I guess I'm strong enough to stand it," he said resignedly.

He looked at the lapping slate-colored water racing along the boat's side down below, and let his mind play with the thought of a hasty jump, the cold submersion, the cry of alarm, the panic on the boat, the attempt to save him. He saw the newspaper headings in the morning: "Business-man Commits Suicide—Philip Baldwin of Baldwin & Lansing Drowns—Unhappy Love Affair Asserted by Friends to Have Been Cause of Rash Act."

An exclamation of distaste rose to his lips and he shrugged his big shoulders impatiently. There would be no satisfaction in suicide; no one would sympathize with him; Mary would never hear of it; Lucy might regret the part she had played; only his mother would grieve. He was not the first man who had been "disappointed in love." Millions of others had weathered the bitterness of blighted hopes. As he had already said, he had courage enough and strength enough to stand it. A sudden resolution came to him.

"I'm *done* with it!" he said fiercely. "I'll put her out of my life. I'll forget her and everything about her,—God helping me!"

When he reached the *Abbey*, he did not go down to dinner with the rest of his club-mates, but spent the hour flinging into an old trunk, lugged up from the cellar, her letters, her photograph, the books he had read since he had known her, a framed engraving of "The Infant of Prague," the rosary and blessed medals she had given him. As he put them into the trunk, he refused to let himself look at them, avoiding them with his eyes. When he had finished, he slammed down the lid, locked it, and dragged the trunk back to the basement. Nothing remained that could remind him of her,—not even a book.

§ 2.

He over-estimated his will power. There was nothing to distract him, and his thoughts betrayed him. Memories, visions of her pursued him; he could not escape them; they drove him frantic. In desperation, seeking diversion, he went to call on Mrs. Grotenberg.

He found her in a dismal basement flat whose entrance was hidden away beneath a cascade of steps that rose from the level of the street to a more pretentious vestibule above, upon which gave the doorways to the flats on upper floors.

There was no light in the passageway. Gas from the open doorway of the parlor streamed into the dark hall. Mrs. Grotenberg peered at him through the gloom, uncertainly.

"Who is it? . . . Why, Philip Baldwin!—Why, how perfectly splendid!—I'm so glad. Come right in; you're a perfect *dear* to come and see me."

She caught his big hand and drew him in, taking his hat, eagerly pushing him into the lighted parlor.

"Violet's doing her lessons," she explained, as a gawky little girl, with straight hair held back rigidly by a circular comb, looked up from her books and stared at him, stolidly.

"Take your books out to the kitchen, Vi,—there's a dear," Mrs. Grotenberg said ingratiatingly, gathering the child's schoolbooks together as she spoke. "This is Violet Harper," she said to Philip. "Her mother's a dear friend of mine. She's out on a case, now. She's a maternity nurse,—I think I told you."

The room was small and shabbily furnished. The gas flared noisily, disseminating light through globes of pressed glass. A set of old-fashioned plush furniture bordered the room; a drop-leaf table with books, pen, ink and papers upon it, stood in the centre; against the two front windows, whose shades were close drawn, leaned a lop-sided wire flower-stand in whose racks dark-leaved plants languished. In the seat of an S-backed horsehair rocker a cat lay comfortably curled, blinking apathetically at the intruder, its paws neatly tucked from sight. Mrs. Grotenberg tilted the chair-back, dislodging the animal without ceremony.

"Sit here, Phil," she said, fluttering with eagerness. "My dear! why didn't you let me know you were coming? I look a sight! I never thought I'd see you again."

"Oh, I've been counting on coming," he said, embarrassed.

"It's good to see you. How'd you find Connie and the baby?"

She drew a chair near him and sat down close by, leaning forward, her hands clasped upon her knee. Philip studied her face closely.

She had changed, she was much older,—thirty-five or six, he decided. Her sallow olive-tinted skin was smooth, but beside the crow's-feet around the eyes, there were skinny wrinkles across the lids, and the little pouch of loose flesh beneath her chin gave tell-tale evidence of her age. There was gray in her thin silky hair. It was in mild disorder to-night, disclosing across the front the hairy, dun-colored texture of a "rat" she wore beneath. She was considerably thinner and her face was sad. He could not reconcile himself to this new sadness; it troubled him and finally he spoke of it.

"Oh—I've had my share of trouble," she told him with a smiling sigh. "It isn't easy for a woman to get along, you know. I've always had my living to make, and—and I've been sick. I had a fine position for awhile in a doctor's office and then I tried the renting business. There was a physicians' building just put up and I rented the offices to doctors and dentists. That was wonderful while it lasted, but luck went back on me. One of the doctors became my enemy, told some dreadful lies about me,—not one word of them was true,—and I lost the position. Then I got sick, and I was three months in the French Hospital, and that ate up nearly every cent I'd saved. When I got out, I wasn't strong enough to work, and I tried the country. . . . But, Phil, —the time came when I just *had* to find something to do. You can't go on living on nothing,—and I had a dreadful time finding *anything*. I even tried being a waitress!"

She laughed a little contemptuously. Philip frowned, nodding sympathetically.

"Oh, it was a long weary,—weary fight." Her lip quivered and tears veiled her dark eyes. "I used to be good-looking, once; —at least, they *said* I was. I was young, at any rate. But now,

—since I've been sick,—I'm old and ugly,—and it's hard, awfully hard,—you know,—when you're that way."

Philip's frown deepened and he fisted his hands.

"A man doesn't understand," she continued when she had regained her composure. "It doesn't make any difference with him. The older he gets, the more confidence he inspires, and it's all right about his age. . . . But a woman's got no chance. I tried soliciting magazine subscriptions, and answered advertisements for nursemaids. You know I love little children, Philip, —babies like Paul. But nobody wanted an old, ugly woman——"

"Aw, cut it out, Mrs. G.!" Philip interrupted in distress. "You're nothing of the sort. You—you—you look *fine*."

Mrs. Grotenberg smiled sadly, and shook her head.

"You just *say* that, Phil, because you're good-hearted, and we've always been friends. But I've got a mirror, and I *know*."

"You're crazy!" he exclaimed impatiently. "I don't care anything about your mirror,—I've got eyes in my head, haven't I?"

She met his gaze steadily for a moment and then she asked seriously:

"And will you tell me honestly, what you see?"

"Why, sure!" he agreed. "I—I see a—a darned fine-looking, —a good-looking woman!"

"Ah-h, Philip, you're a darling to say it," she said, happily, reaching forward to press his hand affectionately. "I *knew* you'd say something nice. . . . It's been a different story with you, hasn't it? You were just *bound* to be successful. I knew that from the first. You've had nothing but one success after another!"

The thought of Mary and his disappointed love swept across his mind, and a dark shadow wiped the smile from his face. His companion anxiously bent toward him.

"Haven't you been a big success, Phil? You look so handsome and you dress so elegant! I heard—they told me you were in business for yourself,—you and your friend had gone into real estate together——"

"Yes,—that's true," he said. "But it isn't always money that makes people happy."

"Is it Marjorie, still, Phil? Does that spoiled selfish little thing still hold you?"

She clenched her small hands and beat them together.

"Oh, what *fools* men are! When I think of the way that creature treated you,—when I think of the splendid, chivalrous love you wasted on her,—and the way you've kept on loving her, putting up with her nonsense and her utter selfishness, I could—could *cry* with rage! Phil,—Marjorie wasn't worth the tip of your littlest finger. She was a selfish,—spoiled,—mean-minded girl, and the luckiest day of your life was the day she met that Roy North! . . . Oh, I heard all about it. I've kept track of you. . . . If you don't realize how lucky you are, you're *blind*, that's all there is about it. . . . I can't understand it, your caring for a shallow little girl like that,—a fine big feller like you!"

Philip smiled as the tirade continued, and presently he laughed outright. Her earnestness, the violence of her feelings amused him.

"You're all wrong, Mrs. G. It's not Marjorie. I don't agree with all the things you say about her, but I guess she was spoiled, and Mrs. Jones never brought her up right to be a good wife. She was a lot too young when I married her. And it wasn't altogether her fault we couldn't get along. I was to blame a good deal——"

Mrs. Grotenberg sniffed impatiently, and compressed her lips.

"——I *was*, just the same," he continued. "But she's older now and North is better suited to her. I shouldn't be in the least surprised if they made a success of it, and were happy. Connie tells me they go a lot to the theatres, and Margie's crazy about New York. I was sore for awhile, and got awfully mad whenever I thought about her and North having a good time, but now I feel different. Margie means no more to me than—than—, well, I can't think who!"

"You mean you don't care for her any more?"

"Not *that* way. I honestly hope she's happy and gets on."

"But then—I don't understand. It isn't money, and you're not grieving for Marjorie—— Is there something else, Phil? You looked so sad a moment ago."

He shrank from the idea of discussing Mary, yet he wanted to confide in someone. It took courage to mention a name so sacred to him, but he was drawn to speak of her. During his recital he had to pause now and again to steady his voice. Memories of her returned to him, poignant, harrowing, heart-breaking. It seemed an incomprehensible, an unbelievable thing that she had done. How was it possible for any woman as beloved as she, who admitted her love in return, to sacrifice herself and him,—all the joy and happiness they were ever to know in life,—for a prejudice, a religious whim, a priest's say-so? He tried to make the nobility of her character real, to convey a true picture of her religious nature, being suddenly fearful lest his listener might criticize her, might condemn her with the violence she once had used towards Marjorie. He could not bear to have Mary's conduct questioned; that would be intolerable, odious, horrible. Confusion swept over him. He had been an imbecile, a babbler, to talk about her at all.

But when he stopped, clumsily, upon an unfinished sentence, and turned to his listener in fear of denunciation, he unexpectedly found her in tears. She had let them flow unchecked, fearful lest a motion of her hand might distract him. Now she reached for her handkerchief and frankly wiped her eyes.

"Phil-ip,—Phil-ip! You—you *luckless* boy! It was just like you to fall in love with a good Catholic. I could see it coming. The minute you mentioned her faith, I knew what you were up against. I—I used to be a Catholic, myself. My mother was very religious,—and I know how Catholics take those things. . . . My dear, *dear* boy! . . . What happened then?"

"That's all there was to it. She went away to England and left no address. Marjorie will live to be seventy. I shouldn't want her to die just to give me my freedom. There's no use going to England after Mary. She's not the kind to change her mind. . . . But—*she* was the woman, Mrs. G., God intended for me. *She* was the woman I should have waited for! I should never have married Marjorie. I thought once I loved her,—and I guess I *did* love her after a fashion,—but not the real kind of love. I know what that is, now,—the kind that comes only once, and endures for a lifetime."

Mrs. Grotenberg drew his hand into her lap and squeezed it affectionately.

"Oh, I know—I know," she whispered; "you're so unlucky, Phil!"

He sighed heavily. "Well, you're a mighty good friend," he said, responding to the warmth of her sympathy.

"Isn't there anything you can do about it?"

"Yes, I can forget her, and that's what I am going to try my level best to do. Coming back from Piedmont the other day, I made up my mind I'd try to make myself stop caring. I put all her letters and her photograph, and the things she'd given me, and the books and the poems she'd read aloud to me into a trunk and took it down to the store-room. I haven't got a thing to remind me of her,—not a thing. . . . I determined I'd put her out of my thoughts, but—but I *can't*, Mrs. G.,—I *can't* do it."

His voice broke, and he coughed harshly to cover his emotion. His companion hugged his hand. She drew a long, quivering breath, and then suddenly bent over and pressed her lips fiercely against his fingers. The act was spontaneous, impulsive. At once constraint enveloped them, and they grew conscious of themselves. A swift memory of what had transpired in the back room of the little dyeing-and-cleaning establishment flashed back to their minds. Philip flushed and pulled his hand away. The woman bent her head lower and pressed her moist handkerchief tightly between her palms.

"You shouldn't do that!" he burst out.

Mrs. Grotenberg cleared her throat slightly, and her lips trembled a little before she attempted to speak.

"You've always been very dear to me, Philip," she managed with hesitation. "You know there's something of a mother in every woman, and I just can't help feeling that way toward you."

"Oh,—that's all right, Mrs. G.,—that's all right," he said hastily. "But I don't like anybody to do that,—kissing my hand, you know,—it's kind of servile, kind of fawning. *That's* what I mean. You're too good to me,—too kind."

"You're such an old friend!"

"I'm glad—*awful* glad you think so."

"I feel so sorry for you. The women you love are always nworthy of you."

"Who—Mary? Unworthy?"

"We-ll, perhaps not. But you *do* deserve a fine good woman, 'hil, who will truly appreciate you."

He shrugged his shoulders indifferently.

A glimpse of the old black onyx clock on the mantel brought n exclamation to his lips.

"Good gracious! It's after twelve!"

Mrs. Grotenberg smiled mildly.

"What of it?"

"Why, it's late. You have to get up early in the morning."

"I'd stay up the rest of the night, Phil, to have you here talking ver old times with me! Don't go yet. Come out into the kitchen nd we'll have a bite of something. Vi's gone to bed long ago."

"Phil," she began, as despite his remonstrances she led the ay back to the gloomy kitchen at the end of the long, dark allway, "Phil,—do you know you're the first friend of my own ho's ever come to see me in this house! And I've lived here ver a year."

Deftly, rapidly, she scrambled eggs on the gas stove, made oast, a pot of fragrant coffee, and set out on the clean pine-opped table a jar of marmalade, and fresh yellow cheese. 'hilip enjoyed the late supper, found it amazingly good. He moked and they talked, and it was after two in the morning hen he finally said good-night.

As part of his new program of forgetfulness, the next day, eing Sunday, he went out to see Lucy, and took dinner with her nd Wilbur. The prospect had not been specially pleasing, but e had forced himself to make the effort, and on arrival was lad he had come, for Lucy's pleasure was genuine and hearten-ng. He had not seen her for weeks, and it troubled him to feel hey were drifting apart. By their eager, affectionate greeting f one another, each understood that a reconciliation had been ffected. Philip responded instantly to her contrite kiss and the lea for forgiveness in her eyes, but he was aware that somehow ucy had grown away from him. She was hardly the same per-

son as the golden-haired, romping child he had loved to swing high above his head. She was "Mrs. Lansing," now,—"pretty Mrs. Lansing," "charming Mrs. Lansing." Her name had come to have social significance. What Mrs. Lansing did, where Mrs. Lansing went, whom Mrs. Lansing entertained, was of interest to readers of the society columns in the newspapers. Earlier in the year Philip had come upon a large picture of her in a Sunday edition, bearing the legend: *Mrs. Wilbur Lansing, whose beauty and charming personality have made her much in demand this season.*

To-day he found her serving tea to three or four of her women friends. She performed her small duties with a pretty niceness that did not escape even her brother. He was much impressed by the wheel-cart upon which the tea and dainty refreshments arrived, having never seen one of these contrivances before. He wondered where Lucy picked up such things. He recognized she had a social gift she delighted in exercising.

Among the tea callers was a stout gray-haired, homely woman, Miss Beckie Meriweather. It was evident from the deference paid her by the other women she enjoyed social prominence. She was coarse-featured, loud-voiced, brusque and,—Philip decided,—exceedingly amusing. He liked her at once. She had a way of saying witty things so crisply as to intensify their drollness.

Miss Meriweather evidently had taken a warm liking to Lucy. She addressed herself exclusively to her hostess, and on departing kissed her vigorously, and made her promise to telephone the next morning. Philip could see his sister was pleased. When Wilbur came in from a run out to the beach in his new automobile, after the other callers had gone, Lucy told him in detail about Miss Meriweather's graciousness. Her husband, however, was frankly uninterested. He listened patiently, but his brother-in-law could see he was anxious to talk about his new car, and as soon as Lucy gave him the opportunity, he turned eagerly to Philip.

"She's a humdinger, Phil! Runs like a sewing machine! . . . Y'know that grade up Jackson Street from Van Ness? Well, sir,—she made it in *high!* . . . She's got the power and plenty of speed. . . . I got her up to fifty 's easy as kiss your hand. . . ."

Dinner was formally served with many appurtenances that

nade the table look charming. Small silver vases held a few prays of heather; the centre-piece was of heavy, rich lace; there ere rows of polished silver knives, forks and spoons; the butter lates were of silver, and the finger-bowls of rock crystal in which oated leaves of lemon verbena. Lucy loved the meticulous care hese small niceties required; Wilbur was as oblivious to them as f they did not exist. He shoved his cutlery to either side as soon s he sat down, slopped red juice from the roast on the spotless loth when he carved, and dropped ashes from his cigar on his utterplate, on his bread, on himself. Lucy frowned in distress, nd Philip saw her bite her lip; only when he commenced to make little wet mess of his cigar ashes upon his plate did she protest.

Wilbur did not seem to feel at ease in his own home. For a ong time he wandered restlessly about the luxurious rooms, loving from chair to lounge and back to chair, never relaxing, ever permitting himself either repose or tranquillity. He did ot seem to know how to make himself comfortable. When at st he succeeded, it was as if, with great deliberation, he had nally shut his eyes to the rich upholstery about him. He spread imself out on a deep-seated, soft-pillowed davenport, his feet in ne heart of a brocaded cushion, flecking ashes from his cigar in ne direction of an ash-receiver on the tabaret at his elbow, heedess where they fell. Finally at ease, he stared up at the ceiling, nd rambled along interminably about his affairs, discussing busiess plans and telling of profitable deals he had "put across," rophesying what his shrewdness was to accomplish. He was full f enthusiasm over a proposition in connection with Russian Hill.

"By George, Phil,—we'll take up a lot of that stuff,—it can e bought for damned little,—an' tear down those shanties and Vop tenements, and build some studios over there! We'll terrace hat side facing the bay, and lay out some lots, and we'll get ome of those big Italian pots and plant 'em with flowers.—By um,—we'll clean up on it! Your Uncle Dudley knows where to et the coin; Gerald Prentiss is just crazy to go into a deal of at kind. . . ."

Lucy came to kiss her brother good-night at nine o'clock. She id in answer to his surprised inquiry, that she always went to ed early, whenever possible.

"It keeps me young, and I love to read in bed." Then, as she kissed him a second time, she put her lips close to his ear. "I'm sorry—*awfully* sorry about Miss Rowland, Phil dear. I heard, of course. Mrs. Perry Hoyt told me. I wish I had never teased you!"

He pulled her closer and returned her kiss warmly.

"I'm going to find a good wife for you, Phil," she continued, "a woman that will make you *really* happy. . . . Leave it to me, —and trust me. You're far too nice and too good-looking to be allowed to roam around, single!"

Philip exclaimed in pretended dismay. "You let me alone!"

"Now, that's all right," Lucy said departing. "I know what's best for you,—and I intend to have my way."

§ 4.

Evening was the part of the day Philip dreaded most. Business distracted him during the mornings and afternoons, for real estate in San Francisco had begun to boom, and he had decided to follow his partner's example, and speculate a little on his own account. Money had begun to pile up. He was surprised one day to discover the size of his personal balance at the bank. It seemed wise to invest it somehow, and he began conservatively to buy real estate.

But when towards the end of the afternoon the office grew more and more silent, and the sound of the typewriters ceased, he knew the day's work was over, the clerks had gone home, and he was alone. Sometimes Wilbur took him up to the Union League Club, and bought him a drink before they separated, but after that nothing offered except the hubbub at the *Abbey* or a variety show at the *Orpheum*. He was afraid to let himself think. For a few hours at the office he had been able to enjoy his old peace of mind, but leisure brought memories. In these hours an evil depression wrapped him in a black cloak. He hated his work, he hated his friends, he hated existence. What was the use of it all? Why toil,—why plan,—why strive to be agreeable, when there was no agreeableness within him? One toiled to achieve

appiness,—but there never could be any happiness for him,—not ithout Mary? Why go on? Why make the effort? He fled from hese speculations.

To escape from himself he went to see Mrs. Grotenberg. She istracted and interested him. She needed his companionship as nuch as he did hers. He fell into the habit of waiting for her t the Ferry Building until the seven-twenty boat was in, as after nat she was free. At that late hour it was necessary for her to urry home to complete preparations for dinner, already under ay, for herself and Violet. Everything in connection with the neal had been carried as far as possible before she left the flat t twenty minutes to five. The table had been set with its red ringed cloth and bone-handled knives and forks; the bread had een sliced, the stew set to simmer, the custard or flavored jelly eft to cool and harden on the window-sill. By eight o'clock they ere usually at table. When Mrs. Harper was at home,—which as seldom,—it was easier, of course, but by herself, Mrs. Grotenerg found it hard work with the dishes to wash and the kitchen o clean up after supper. She declared she liked to cook, but she ould have preferred a more responsive appetite than little Vioet's, who was delicate. It was a dreary existence at best, she onfessed to Philip. She did not want him to think she was omplaining, but she grew so tired! It was the same thing over gain day after day. She had to be up at half-past five every norning, to get the child's breakfast started, to have everything n readiness so that Violet could manage for herself at eight before ne went off to school. Mrs. Grotenberg was due at the newstand in the Ferry Building by seven o'clock. She was on duty ntil nine and then free until five in the afternoon, but this time ne frequently spent in bed, she told Philip, resting.

On several occasions he insisted upon taking her out to dinner t a restaurant, and was frequently distressed on meeting her o note the weary look in her face, the dark circles beneath her ne eyes. It was necessary to include Violet at their dinners, and ne three often went to one of the cheap oyster grottos or *table hôte* "parlors" on Polk Street close by.

For a long time Mrs. Grotenberg begged Philip to try one of er dinners, but he put her off. It would mean extra work for

her and extra dish washing. But a Sunday came when she prevailed on him to take dinner with her, and Philip was surprised at the deliciousness of the meal, though he remembered that Marjorie and her mother had often spoken of Mrs. G. as an excellent cook. She set before him an appetizer of picked shrimps, an onion soup,—the best he had ever tasted,—a wonderful combination of corn and sweet potatoes, a rabbit stew, tender and savory, a dry lettuce salad with a hint of garlic in the dressing, and a frozen pudding with *marrons*, and Turkish office. Philip was enthusiastic. He declared he had never eaten better food in his life, and she was the finest cook in the world. Mrs. Grotenberg flushed with pleasure, the dark color flooding her neck and olive-toned cheeks.

"Well, it's kind of you, Phil dear. I used to be called a good cook but, you know, you get out of practice. There's *nothing* to what I scramble together for Vi and myself. The child can only eat about three things! . . . But I love the scheming and the fussing for a nice little dinner. Now perhaps you won't believe me, but to-night's cost less than three dollars! I paid out exactly two dollars and fifty-five cents, and you can add twenty or thirty cents more, if you want to, for the butter I used, the oil and vinegar and things like that!"

"No,—you don't mean to tell me!" Philip affected great surprise. The figure she mentioned had no significance for him. Had the dinner cost three times the amount, it would have seemed reasonable.

"Well,—now I've got to help you clean up a bit, Mrs. G., with these dishes."

She scoffed at the suggestion.

"I guess *not!* What nonsense, Phil! A great big feller like you washing dishes! You *know* how I used to nag at you for allowing Mrs. Jones to bulldoze you into doing it! . . . The kitchen's no place for a man. That's where women belong, and I won't stand for any man coming into any kitchen *I'm* running. . . . Leave 'em lay, Phil. I'll do them after I come up from downtown to-morrow morning. . . . Come on, let's go for a walk. Vi's got her lessons to do, and I promised her the parlor. We'll walk down to Polk Street,—or I tell you what, Phil,—it's a

nderful night!—let's ride out to the Beach and back! The oon will be up 'bout eleven and it's warm,—like summer."

The night was all that Mrs. Grotenberg had said of it. Others id conceived the notion of a ride to the Beach, and the open ats of the electric cars were crowded with young couples. There as a good deal of giggling and suppressed laughter; the proxity of happy youth and gay spirits was infectious. Philip pulled his cigar, let the warm fragrant night air blow in his face, as pleasantly aware of Mrs. G.'s companionship and her contentent, and was happy himself. They got along easily together, he ought. There were never any troublesome explanations between em, never any arguments nor unpleasantnesses. They thought d felt alike about things. Most important of all, there was ver the necessity for talking. They had the joint capacity for joying long silences.

The ride to the Beach was so successful and pleasant that e following week Philip bought a motor-car, selecting one of e same make as Wilbur's. His money was lying idle in the nk, and it occurred to him that driving a car in the evenings d perhaps on lonesome Sundays would prove an excellent traction for his mind. It would be fun, too, to surprise Mrs. otenberg with the car some evening after he had learned how drive.

The automobile gave him great pleasure. He allowed affairs the office to take care of themselves while he stole away early the afternoons to drive his new plaything out to the Park d the Cliff House. It was a proud and memorable morning hen he first engineered his way downtown through traffic to his ice. He permitted the automobile to stand beside the curb in ont of the door throughout the day, its glossy surface becomg covered with the dust and dirt of the gusty street, for the tisfaction of pointing it out to a client or an acquaintance, and marking casually:

"Seen my new car? Great little boat. . . . Just got her the ner day."

The supreme moment in his new joy of possession came when drove up before Mrs. Grotenberg's dismal basement flat. He ggested they take another ride to the Beach. When he guided

her toward the waiting vehicle, opened the polished door, and bade her get in, he experienced a sensation of suffocating pride. Her amazement, her delight, her praise of himself, the car, and his driving were all he had confidently expected. Nor was the drive, itself, less agreeable than he had anticipated. To rush onward into the black night, somehow sure the road-bed lay safely ahead beyond the flickering rays of the auto lamps, the salt cold air sweeping into their faces, the woman crouching beside him, huddled under the heavy robe he had bought especially to tuck about her, was a thrilling experience, altogether soul-gratifying.

There were many such expeditions. Mrs. Grotenberg shared his enthusiasm for them. She declared she could never tire of driving. He bought her a motor veil and a pair of velvet-padded goggles, and with the veil tied snugly about an old hat, the glasses protecting her eyes, the collar of a big coat turned up about her ears, she would crouch low in the seat, cuddling beneath the robe, leaning ever so slightly against his arm that gripped the steering wheel, and remain so for hours, hardly shifting her position, saying no word.

On Sundays they attempted longer runs, but on these days there was always Violet for a complication. They tried the experiment of taking her with them, attempting to make her comfortable on the back seat, but the little girl complained she was "jounced" around too much, and that she was lonely "all by herself." Philip persuaded her to invite a school-friend, but this proved equally unfortunate. The Sunday trips had therefore to be abbreviated to let Mrs. Grotenberg go home in time to get Violet's dinner. Lunch, the small girl was able to manage for herself.

But the pace was too strenuous for Mrs. Grotenberg. Her long day, the late hours with Philip in the car proved too great a tax upon her strength. One evening he found her in bed. The flat was in lamentable disorder. Violet had attempted to get her own supper; the place smelled of burnt food. Mrs. Grotenberg refused to eat. Mrs. Harper was on a confinement case across the bay. Neither Mrs. Grotenberg nor Violet would hear of allowing Philip to communicate with her. While they dis-

aded him in this, he refused to listen to further remonstrances
to Mrs. Grotenberg's assurances she was only temporarily
capacitated and would be all right again in the morning. He
lled up the *Abbey*, got Doctor Glass on the telephone, gave him
e house number, begged him to call immediately and to bring
trained nurse with him. An hour later when Philip departed,
e nurse was in charge, and had agreed,—for extra compensa-
on,—not only to look after her patient, but to take charge of
e small household until Mrs. Grotenberg was strong enough to
sume her duties.

§ 5.

Ten days elapsed before Philip could take Mrs. Grotenberg
t in the car for her first airing in the sunshine. While she was
sting,—Doctor Glass said it was all she needed,—he had felt
nerally at loose ends. He took the occasion to motor up to
acaville, and spent a few days with his parents, and with Harry
d Rosemary.

The Judge and Mrs. Baldwin had bought in the town a pretty
hite-painted cottage, with banksia roses scrambling over the
rrow porch, and a glistening white picket fence with a swing
te and tall posts at the corners that hemmed in a lovely garden
on which Philip's mother expended all her energy. The Judge's
atica had so crippled him he would never be able to go about
ain with his old freedom. Part of the Tucker orchard lands
d been sold, and part leased to Japs. Philip's father declared
hemently he never wanted to set foot upon the place again. He
s growing a little feeble. The skin under his eyes had com-
nced to hang in wrinkled pockets, his cheeks sagged pendu-
sly. Philip realized with concern that the Judge was getting
be an old man.

Mrs. Baldwin adjusted herself to her new life with character-
ic complacency. The children were all married and well
nched into the world; her work, and her husband's, with re-
d to them, was done. Her duty now was to look after the
ling old man, and she set herself to the task with the same

earnest cheerfulness she had shown when the Tucker acres fe into her hands. Her great delight was in her grandchildre Harry's small boys.

Philip spent two days with his brother and sister-in-law. H had not been under their roof since his visit when they were brid and groom. They had often begged him to come to them, bu something had always occurred to prevent. He was anxious t go, now, and a little proud, too, to be driving his own car up t his brother's door.

Harry had been married to Rosemary for five years, and Phili was aware that they had had a hard time. Misfortune had pur sued them, and the neighbors sometimes shook their heads, declar ing it seemed as if Joe Church's bad luck had stuck to the place There had been a series of disastrous accidents: brown rot in th apricots had spoiled Harry's first crop; a drought the next yea had ruined all the fruit about Vacaville, and during the subse quent two years there had been far from sufficient water. Harr had not harvested a satisfactory crop since he was married. Be sides these set-backs, the young Baldwins had had a fire. Th cutting shed Joe Church had built had been burned to the groun and with it the sulphuring shed and one of the out-houses. On year there had been a hard-fought battle with the Fruit Packin Company, which up to that time shipped and marketed the valley' output. A 'Cot and Prune Association had been formed by th growers who proposed to do this work themselves. Harry ha been one of its chief organizers, and when the plan failed fo lack of support, the Fruit Packing Company declined to handl Harry's shipments, so that he had been obliged to haul his frui into Winters in order to sell it.

The Church property was carrying a second mortgage now Dermot Phelan had accepted Harry's note, and both his mothe and Philip had lent him money. It looked as if Harry would neve get a satisfactory start. Rosemary had had two children in th five years, and after the first baby was born she had been i a long time. For sixteen weeks there had been a trained nurs in the house.

Philip was reminded of this perverseness of fortune as h drove up to the door. An agitated group was gathered on th

porch. Rosemary was there, distraught and crying, the limp figure of a child in her arms, while crowding about were a frightened servant and two of the ranch hands. Little Sam,—the three-year-old,—had had a bad tumble, had struck his head against the foot-scraper on the lowest porch step, and there was an ugly bleeding gash in his white forehead. Philip's arrival in his car was timely. Rosemary, without hat or wrap, climbed in beside him, the baby in his begrimed rompers on her lap, a wet towel held against the bleeding forehead. In ten minutes Philip had deposited them at the doctor's door in Vacaville, and half an hour later was driving them home again, a white surgical bandage about the cropped head of the small boy, who had bravely submitted to the two deft stitches with which the physician had drawn together the ragged edges of the dark, clotted wound.

"It *does* seem as though we have had more than our share of trouble," Rosemary said, laughing shakily, "but it will all turn out right, Phil. Harry's an angel. He never complains and he never gets discouraged, and I never knew a man to work any harder. He's always so amiable and cheerful, and so considerate of me, and sweet with the children. He worships the boys; he's simply crazy about them. . . . We have our compensations, Phil, even if everything *does* seem to go wrong!"

In Rosemary's estimate of her husband's industry, Philip, by the end of his visit, was quite ready to agree, but it impressed him as drudgery. Harry worked tirelessly. He was astir before "sun-up" and long after night had fallen he was still puttering about the barns, tool-shop and pump-house, by the light of a swinging lantern. Philip, sitting on the porch with his sister-in-law in the warm flush of the dark summer night, could see his brother's legs, in the circle of bobbing light, moving here and there in the blackness.

The two men drove over the ranch in Philip's car the following morning, and Harry pointed out with some pride how he was developing his small property. He had blasted out a number of old trees two winters before, and the new saplings were coming on tall and in heavy leaf. Experiments with olives and almonds had turned out better than he hoped, and there were indications that these would some day prove profitable. The old 'cot trees he

was gradually replacing with sugar prunes, and he confidently believed an excellent market could be made for the dried fruit as soon as the new Association of Fruit Growers in and around Vacaville,—at last an accomplished fact,—commenced to operate. The almonds he was already boxing in cartons and shipping east. By advertising them in a small way, he had worked up a respectable mail-order business for them.

Philip was impressed. Harry had ideas, and it was clear that with anything like an even break of luck, his carefully-thought-out plans and his indefatigable industry would win for him, some day, a comfortable living.

But the constant grind, the colossal labor entailed, made Philip shudder. There were other ways of making a living,—surer ways, infinitely more lucrative. Half the amount of energy Harry put into his work would earn an easy living for himself and his small family in the city. Moreover, there would be no running of terrible risks,—frosts and droughts and pests, which took no heed of either diligence or ability.

It was half past eight on Saturday morning. Philip stretched luxuriously in his comfortable bed, and thought of his brother who had been up and at work for three hours already. Philip's whole business day was only twice as long, and he could come and go as he pleased, taking two or three days off now and then whenever he liked. He congratulated himself on having chosen the city life. He had Marjorie to thank for that, at any rate. It was a lucky thing for him he had married her and not Rosemary. He might have been in Harry's shoes now, working all day long and half the night, seven days out of the week! Harry was haggard, gaunt, thin as a rail. Philip had noticed his forearm the day before; the muscles were so clearly defined beneath the skin they reminded him of a lithographed chart he had once seen in a doctor's office, in which the thews and sinews in the human arm had been laid bare and had been horribly depicted in scarlet gruesomeness. There was nothing to Harry except bone and muscle. In some degree Philip envied him his hardness and slimness. He himself was getting soft and fleshy, distressingly stout.

Before he went away, he managed a serious talk with his

brother, telling him he had nothing but the heartiest approval for everything he had done, and for his future plans. He had every reason to believe that the time would come when the ranch would yield a fair return, but he wanted Harry to consider how much easier life would be in San Francisco, how much less difficult it was to make a satisfactory living there, how much more comfort there would be for himself and Rosemary. He assured Harry that if he would consider a move to the city, he could promise him a good job inside of a fortnight.

Harry only laughed amiably.

"Why, good Lord, Phil!" he said. "I'm much obliged, of course, but I wouldn't think of quitting here, now. Rosemary and I have worked too darned hard on this old place, to—to stop. We're going to make it pay, and pay *big*. I know what I'm talking about! Why, bless your soul, Phil, she and I've put our hearts into this land, and she wouldn't think of going down to live in the city for *twice* the income."

Philip shrugged his big shoulders. It was all he could say. Harry wouldn't see the situation right. He had the small farmer's outlook and there was no persuading him he was wrong. He was ready to sacrifice himself and his wife and his children for a sentimental idea. Suppose he *had* put in five years on the ranch, was that any reason why he should put in five more? Ranching was an interesting business, but no one had ever claimed it to be a profitable one.

Philip twisted the end from a cigar with his teeth, and cranked his engine.

"If you ever need any money to tide you over between seasons, or to use as an investment, let me know," he said as he climbed into the car. "I've got it in the bank, you know, and I'd just as soon lend it to you as let it lie there."

"Well, thanks, Phil," Harry said, shaking hands with him. "That's white of you, I'm sure. I guess I won't need any more. Borrowing's over for me and Rosemary, I hope."

§ 6.

Philip wanted Mrs. Grotenberg to give up her job of checking parcels. It was clear to him she was not strong enough for the work, and the Ferry Building was cold, bleak and full of draughts. It struck him as preposterous that she should work so hard for a miserable fifteen dollars a week, when money kept on rolling in to him, and deposits in the bank steadily continued to increase with little effort on his part. He tried to argue this out with her one day, and when she broke down and cried, attempting to kiss his hand, he grew angry and was cross with her. Fifteen dollars a week meant nothing to him. It was absurd for her to make such a fuss over so trifling a sum. They both had had trouble, and it was quite natural, he urged, they should help one another whenever they could. She had been a good friend to him; why shouldn't he be permitted to do something for her?

He was anxious to help even more substantially. He did not like the idea of her slaving as she did in the Harper household: cooking Violet's dinners, washing dishes, cleaning rooms, running Mrs. Harper's errands.

"But, Phil dear," she protested, amused at his seriousness, "I earn my board and lodging that way! I don't pay Mrs. Harper one cent for my meals or my room!"

"You earn your keep three times over!" he declared vigorously. "Where would Mrs. Harper get anybody to do what you do for her and that helpless child of hers for just room and board? Besides, that girl's plenty old enough to take care of herself. How old *is* she?"

"Who, Vi?—I guess Vi's thirteen."

"Exactly," said Philip. "She ought to look after herself. There're plenty of girls her age that're earning their own livings! Why doesn't her mother get her a job as cash-girl in some store downtown?"

Mrs. Grotenberg laughed. They were having tea together in the Japanese garden in the Park. The June sun was warm and golden magnolias burdened the air with their heavy perfume, the fountain splashed with a pleasant liquid cadence in the rocky

shallow pool where giant goldfish hung poised in the shadows, feeling the water lazily with their feathery fins.

Philip bent toward his companion earnestly.

"You can laugh if you want to, but listen here, Mrs. G., let's talk sensibly. I could give you a job down at the office easy enough. I was thinking about it the other day. Benny Sharp has been asking for an assistant for months; but you know how it is: the minute you were there in the same place with me, I couldn't go 'round with you; there'd be talk, and Wilbur would make things disagreeable. He's awfully particular about what he calls 'decorum in business,' and he's right, of course. And I don't like the idea of begging a job for you in another office. We see a good deal of each other because it happens to be mutually agreeable, and I hate putting you in a position where there might be innuendoes and sly winks or even curiosity about you."

The ever-ready tears filled Mrs. Grotenberg's dark eyes. She glanced down at the limp, shabby gloves in her lap, twisting them about her fingers.

"But there's no reason in the world why I shouldn't do something to help you," Philip continued. "You do a lot for me,—a *tremendous* lot,—and if I have any claim on your friendship, I've got a right to do something in return."

"As if you did not do enough already!" she protested.

"It isn't as much as I *can* do, and that's the only thing to measure by. If I did not have the money, it might be different; but the money's there and that's what you are in need of! Now I propose——"

On a sudden impulse, he reached for the frayed black pocketbook lying in her lap. With one hand he flipped open its bright metal clasp, and felt in his vest pocket for the gold he generally carried there. He found three twenties, dropped them into her purse, and tossed it back into her lap.

"If you really value my friendship, Mrs. G., get yourself something you need. It will please me very much. I'll truly feel a lot better. . . . My dear woman,—you and I aren't *children*. If there is anything fine and good and enduring in our friendship, let's share with one another; it's the only basis. Don't scorn my help just because you happen to be a *woman* and think you can't accept things

from a *man!* Let's be above such silly sentimentality. It's all nonsense between you and me. . . . Come on, now, we'll spin out to the Beach for a breath of the sea before we go home to cook for that Harper brat."

Later, when they were flying out toward the ocean, Mrs. Grotenberg slipped her hand beneath his arm and laid her cheek against it, leaning so for a long time as the car sped smoothly over the deserted road.

"You're very good to an old woman, Phil," she whispered.

He hugged her hand with a pressure of his arm.

"Don't—don't—*don't* say things like that," he said crossly. "You know they make me mad,—and they're not true! . . . I wish we could have dinner together out at the Cliff House, and not be obliged to go back to that child!"

§ 7.

Wilbur planned to take a trip to New York for his summer vacation. He wanted to look over some property on Long Island which had recently been offered in exchange for a corner lot at Carlsbad-by-the-Sea, and he was also anxious to see the big city. Lucy was going to Honolulu with Beckie Meriweather and would not be back until September.

"I wish you would arrange to take your vacation early this summer," Wilbur said to his partner, "so that both of us won't be away from the office at the same time. . . . Where do you think you'll go?"

Philip had given the matter no thought. He had fancied a motor trip up or down the coast, but there was little pleasure in it for him alone. He wished it were possible for Mrs. Grotenberg to go, too. He was thinking of proposing it to her, when she informed him one evening that Mrs. Harper and Violet were leaving in July to spend a month at Inverness, and she did not know what she would do with herself. On this particular evening Mrs. Harper was at home, and it had been possible for Philip to take Mrs. Grotenberg to dinner downtown alone. At once he suggested his plan.

"What do you say we do it, Mrs. G.? Nobody need know a thing about it. You can wait until after Mrs. Harper and Violet go away and then we'll start. We'll drive down to Los Angeles, take in Santa Barbara, and go on down to Coronado, and then to Riverside and Pomona and that way. Say, Mrs. G.,—it would be *great!* We'll have a wonderful time! A whole month to do just what we please! What do you say? We'll stay as long as we like at a place and then go on whenever it suits us! Why,—it will be simply *out-of-sight!*"

Mrs. Grotenberg lowered her head so that the brim of her hat hid her face. Her quivering chin betrayed her emotion.

"Aw—don't say you won't, Mrs. G.," Philip pleaded. "What's the use? You and I have had some rough deals and if we can get something pleasant out of life together, it's coming to us. What the deuce do you care about convention? Good Heavens! nobody's going to know we aren't married? There's no foolish sentiment between us, and as long as we understand that,—what's the harm? We'd be just a couple of friends going off on a motor trip. I won't say a word to anyone,—let 'em think I'm going off all alone,—and it'll be *nobody's business.* Go on, say you'll do it, Mrs. G.,—go on, say you'll do it,—go on!"

She raised her fine eyes to meet his eager gaze; they were brimming with trembling tears.

"Go on,—will you, Mrs. G.?"

"It would be fun," she managed.

"Oh, you're a *peach!* You're a *dandy!*" he exclaimed.

His companion suddenly caught her napkin to her eyes to check the sudden gush of tears. He was alarmed for fear others in the restaurant would observe them and think he had been abusing her. He frowned in embarrassment, kept his eyes on his plate, and told her under his breath to "cut it out," and not to be a "fool."

The expedition was arranged. Philip, the following day, sent her a small check with a note urging her to get what she would require. He himself ordered a leather contrivance which could be strapped on to an iron grillwork attached to the back of the car, and would neatly hold two roomy suit-cases. He was full of other plans, and bought a revolver, a money belt, a couple of linen dusters, and a lunch basket equipped with blue and white granite cups

and plates, and shining knives and forks. The car was thoroughly overhauled, and an extra iron rack was riveted to the running board to carry an additional tire.

They left San Francisco the day after the Fourth of July. The weather was perfect; the sun flooded the countryside; the air was hot, dry and aromatic; the hills were bare and brown; the foliage of trees and shrubs had turned olive-hued, and, unwashed by rain, were gray with dust; what breeze there was carried with it the strong, burnt smell of tar-weed.

Nothing marred their felicity. They were like school-children out for a picnic, and were equally happy. Philip grew increasingly fond of his companion, conceiving a real affection for her. She was always trying to please him, forestalling his wishes, never expressing one of her own in which he was not sure to agree. He liked to think she loved him. He had always known she did, and perhaps it was this knowledge, he said to her one day, that had made him turn to her when he had been so broken in spirit. He rejoiced in her love; it was comforting and he grew to depend upon it.

Mrs. Grotenberg made no secret of her passion. She told him proudly she "idolized" him, "worshipped and adored" him. The intensity of her emotion frequently brought her to hysterical sobbing. She loved him so violently, she could control neither herself nor her feelings. She watched him with doglike devotion, hanging upon his words, abasing herself before him. Philip protested. He told her he did not like her to be so abject, so humble, but her spirit was a thousand times stronger than his rebellion. Subtly, determinedly, she wove her bonds about him. There was no sacrifice she was not eager to make, provided she could keep alive the affection she had awakened. Her love was paramount; nothing else mattered.

§ 8.

In the mornings when he awoke with prodigious yawns, much stretching of big limbs, and rubbing of eyes, he would find his companion already up and dressed. The window shade had been drawn to keep the light out of his eyes, the morning paper had been brought up by a hotel bell-boy, and Mrs. Grotenberg would

e sitting in the semi-darkness, glancing through its pages, care-
ully avoiding a noise in opening the crackling sheets, while she
aited for him to awake. His tub of hot water would be drawn,
eady for him; his clothes arranged neatly in a chair near at hand;
reakfast, she would inform him, coming eagerly to sit upon the
ed beside him and taking one of his hands affectionately in both
f hers, had been ordered, and was on the way up. Whatever his
lans were for the day, she was anxious to concur in them. If he
uggested they remain at the hotel for another day, she was ready
o agree; if he proposed to make an immediate start, she was ready
or that, too.

"Good gracious, Mrs. G.!" he exclaimed one day, marvelling at
er tractability, "I believe you'd say you'd like it no matter *what*
wanted to do!"

"Well, why shouldn't I?" she asked him seriously. "Why should
object? It's *your* car, and *your* money and *your* vacation! I'm
lad enough to be along. I can't see why *I* or *my* preferences should
e considered."

"Did it ever occur to you that it might give me some pleasure
o do something occasionally *you'd* like to do?"

"You *do,* Philip! . . . I've never been so happy in my life."

He could not deny she had every semblance of being so. She
ought herself a trim motoring bonnet in Los Angeles, and a broad
reen veil, and she sat up most of one night, cutting down the linen
uster he had bought, so as to fit her snugly and hug her back.
he looked neat, even attractive, as she followed Philip into the
oyers of hotels. She was thinner; her big hips were much reduced,
nd her figure was not bad. Her hair was surprisingly short, Philip
iscovered, when he first saw it unbound. It reached little further
han her shoulders and was iron gray but silky. The wind always
layed havoc with it. At the end of half-an-hour in the car it
ould be flying in every direction, streaming across her face in
isfiguring thin strands. But there was real happiness in her eyes.
he little pouch of loose skin beneath her chin would always hang
ere, but many of the wrinkles of worry and fatigue disappeared.
ontentment shone in her face, and Philip delighted in her ready
y at every prospect. It was gratifying to think he could give
much pleasure to anyone.

§ 9.

It was understood she was not to go back to the Harpers when they returned to San Francisco. There was to be a definite end to that arrangement. Philip thought she ought to live in some good boarding-house, but Mrs. Grotenberg urged a flat,—just a small one, where she could keep house.

"It would be such fun to cook for you, Flip!"—she coined the nickname for him during the month they had been together. "When you'd come to see me, I'd have a nice little dinner ready for you, and you'd always have a place where you could go when you were tired and wanted to rest. It wouldn't cost a cent more,—I can assure you of that.—Don't you think it would be nicer? . . . What's troubling you?"

Philip rubbed his chin reflectively, an artificial smile upon his lips, as he gazed into the woman's anxious, dark eyes. He was conscious of a vague wish that some accident, some imperative duty would bring his intimacy with this companionable person abruptly to a close. It had been perfect, flawless, every day they had been together. But he was uneasy. Wouldn't prolonging their association be an anti-climax? Wouldn't it be better to separate, and cherish the memory of weeks so harmoniously spent together for the rest of their lives? It would mean a sacrifice for him; it would not be easy to part from her.

"There's an awfully cunning little group of flats near the gate of the Presidio," suggested Mrs. Grotenberg, watching his face closely. "I don't think they rent for more than thirty dollars a month."

Philip made a face.

"That's—I don't like the neighborhood; it's too near my sister."

Mrs. Grotenberg flushed, but in a moment went on brightly.

"Well,—it wouldn't make the slightest difference to me *where* it was, Flip. I'd just as leave have it in the Potrero! I only thought it ought to be convenient for you."

"Sure,—that's right."

"Don't you think a little four or five room flat would be better

than boarding? . . . You know how people gossip in a boarding-house."

"Yes,—it's always fierce."

"Well then, what do you say? Shall I try to find something out in the Mission or near the Panhandle? I've got a few little things in storage I can get out; I've been paying three dollars a month on them for years! A hundred dollars will furnish the place."

"Better leave it to me; I'll fix it up. I'll talk with Benny Sharp, and get him to find just what you want, and then I'll send you the money, and you can take care of the furnishing. . . . A hundred dollars!" he added contemptuously. "You want it nice and comfortable, don't you? If you're going to do this thing at all, you want to do it up in style."

Some months previously Philip had purchased for himself, as a promising speculation, a business corner on Fillmore Street, an uptown thoroughfare of small shops and stores. He had said nothing to Wilbur about the property, because it had been secured at a low figure, and he believed he would soon have the chance to dispose of it at a substantial profit. That would be the time to tell his partner about it. Wilbur's persistency in describing his own foresight and acumen in his private ventures was often irritating. It would be a satisfaction to give him a bit of his own medicine. Only a few thousand dollars had been required to swing the deal, for there were heavy first and second mortgages upon the property. A saloon occupied the ground floor, and around the corner, facing the side street, were two small stores. Above these were three fair-sized flats of six rooms each and one had been "To Let" for some time. The building was dingy; it needed painting and repairing badly, but the rooms of the flats above were large and had plenty of morning sun.

If Mrs. Grotenberg would have preferred a quieter neighborhood for a home that was not over a saloon, she made no complaint, once she understood the vacant flat was Philip's choice. She appreciated the arrangement as being economical, and immediately professed an enthusiasm Philip had no reason to believe was less sincere than it seemed. He sent her a generous amount to furnish the rooms as she liked.

A day or so after she had moved in, he dropped in to see her, and found her busily making curtains on a rented sewing-machine, while carpet-men maintained a rat-a-tat-tat along the edges and in the corners of the room. Crates and boxes of china and kitchenware, stuffed with excelsior, were being unpacked in the kitchen by the drivers who had just delivered them. She was radiantly happy. She drew him into a vacant room, closed the door, and flung her arms about his neck, hugging him violently, kissing him again and again.

"Flip!—I've never had such fun!" Her eyes were shining and her voice shook. "I haven't had a home of my own since—well, since Gus and I first went to housekeeping, and that's nearly fifteen years ago."

It was one of her rare references to her husband and it jarred. She saw her mistake and instantly diverted Philip by drawing his attention to what she had bought, stopping to explain how economical she had been. Everything looked clean and cheerful, from the blue cartridge paper to the white scrim curtains. The flat was a different place from the six, dingy rooms with grease-stained walls Philip had first inspected. Mrs. Grotenberg's gratitude, her childish delight warmed and pleased him. He found a fine satisfaction in the thought that he was making her happy. He regarded her as an obligation; she represented a form of charity and it pleased him to think of himself as benevolent. Some people took care of orphans,—he said to himself,—some gave liberally to the church, some had other philanthropies; his form of giving was providing for Mrs. G.

He became convinced, shortly, that virtue was its own reward. Mrs. Grotenberg made her little home so inviting, he spent most of his time there. She was always overjoyed to see him; it was clear she meant it when she told him she lived only for his visits. Her welcome was so hearty, her delight in entertaining him so real, it never failed to stir him. It was immensely satisfying to be loved the way she loved him.

She never failed to provide him with an excellent dinner. Philip asserted she was a genius when it came to knowing just what he felt like eating. She was constantly trying some new kind of dish on him, and infallibly it turned out a success. She seasoned food as he had never tasted it. It made little difference whether it was

chicken or hash, clam broth or vegetable salad, she made an art of its preparation.

"By George, Mrs. G.! you certainly *can* cook!" he would exclaim with enthusiasm. "I never ate anything more delicious in my life! What do you call it? Goulash? Well, it's great; give me just a little more."

His hostess suffered under his praise, although it meant so much to her. To please him was her sole purpose in life, and when she succeeded she was happiest. Yet she writhed under his approval, enduring a violent distress. She was quick to check him.

"That's *nothing!* You're the easiest man in the world to cook for. . . . Shall I get you another bottle of beer?"

The beer was always at a right temperature. Philip was extravagantly fond of beer, but over the bar or in a restaurant it was usually served too cold to suit him. His teeth were extremely sensitive and the iced beer made them ache. Mrs. Grotenberg managed to have the bottles chilled to just the right degree, and there was always a plentiful supply. He frequently drank four or five bottles during the evening. They were always quart sized; pint bottles were scarcely ever seen in San Francisco.

When he left his office in the late afternoon at the end of a day's work, he had the alternative of going to Mrs. Grotenberg's cozy flat where a good dinner and a warm welcome awaited him, or to the *Abbey* with its noisy hilarity, the bang of its mechanical piano and racket of high pitched voices. Mrs. Grotenberg might not be expecting him, but he was always sure that would make no difference. He knew she was secretly hoping he might surprise her, and he knew they would enjoy playing a little game they frequently found amusing; she, after warmly welcoming him, would assure him she had not a thing to eat in the house, although materials for a good dinner had been carefully provided against this very possibility; he, full of apologies for having taken her unawares, would assure her that whatever was in the ice-box would be amply satisfactory, and pretend to be tremendously surprised when an excellent meal was set before him.

After an evening begun so auspiciously, they would take a spin out to the Beach in the car, or drop in at a skating rink recently opened in the neighborhood, or they might decide to stay comfort-

ably at home, and go early to bed. Once a fortnight they went to the *Orpheum,* and now and then to the *Alcazar Theatre* where there was an excellent stock company. Mrs. Grotenberg never bored Philip; he was always happy with her; she soothed and rested him.

He fell into the habit of spending nearly every night of the week with her. An occasional evening at home in the *Abbey* irritated him. His dinner would be tasteless, lukewarm and served on a cold plate; there would be no beer; his club-mates would embarrass him by asking him where he had been keeping himself, and why he "showed up so seldom." Having two homes with possessions divided between them was an additional inconvenience. He settled the matter one day by packing his trunk and unceremoniously moving out to the flat on Fillmore Street. He found it infinitely more comfortable.

CHAPTER IV.

§ 1.

In April of the following year occurred in San Francisco the arthquake and fire that laid more than half the city in ashes. A ttle after five o'clock in the morning, Philip was roused by the ocking of the house, the pound of chimney bricks on its roof, and ie crash of crockery in the pantry. Hardly waiting for Mrs. rotenberg to get him a cup of coffee, he leaped into his clothes nd hurried down to his office. There were no cars running, and e was obliged to walk downtown with other anxious business-men nd clerks, observing with excited interest the litter of bricks and allen stone copings that lay strewn in the streets.

Nothing seriously disastrous had occurred at the office. Some f the largest photographs had come down from the wall and lay bout, wrecks of broken glass, frames and paper; the preserved eaches and apricots in their ornamental glass jars had toppled er and made an ugly mess; letters and wire baskets and whatever ad stood on desk-tops had slid off upon the floor; a chair or vo was on its back, and ink generally had been spilled, but there as nothing a brisk morning's setting-to-rights would not rectify. hilip went out to send a telegram to his mother, to inquire about erself and the family, and when he returned he found Wilbur.

His partner was in low spirits.

"It's a rotten business," he growled gloomily, chewing his cheap gar. "It's these damned earthquakes that frighten away Eastern apital. This will be in every paper in the country."

"How's everything out at the house? Was Lucy frightened?"

"Oh—no; she's all right. Shook us up a bit and cracked some f the plaster, but that's a well-built house. One of the pictures n the wall that hung on wires from the picture molding was com-letely turned 'round; had its face to the wall! I had no idea so

much damage had been done until I came downtown. Did you have any breakfast? Let's go over to the Palace and get something to eat."

By nine o'clock the fire had begun to be a menace. It was raging in three sections of the city, sweeping steadily up from the Mission and water front toward the heart of the business section.

"Go get your car, Phil, and we'll move our records and the stuff in the safe out to my house," Wilbur advised.

As he drove down Post Street an hour later, Philip observed the streets to be filled with idle men, wandering aimlessly about, chatting leisurely among themselves, gathering in groups, discussing the progress of the fire, exchanging experiences of the early morning. The saloons did a thriving business. The *Lick House,* the *Occidental* and the *Palace* Hotels were rapidly being emptied of guests, some of them dragging trunks by their handles along the sidewalks. There was a steady rasp-rasp-rasp. By noon the Call Building was burning and everything south of Market Street was in flames. But the general conviction was that the fire would not cross that thoroughfare.

Philip and Wilbur made several trips to their office during the day and filled the tonneaus of their motor-cars with records and the contents of letter files. They were still engaged in this work when the soldiers, forming a constantly enlarging cordon about the fire zone, arrived and drove them out of the building.

At midnight the two men walked together down Market Street, appalled at the sight that presented itself. On the opposite side of the street, blackened, burned hulks of buildings stood smoking, twinkling with tiny flickers of flame and drifting sparks. Only the gutted walls remained, or where these had fallen there stretched away, block after block, as far as the bay itself, a great smoldering field of ruin, waist-high, heaps of wreckage, over which dancing flames still played. Market Street itself was filled with twisted iron, broken bricks, and a jumble of charred débris. As Philip and Wilbur picked their way through this litter, at their left—black, deserted, lifeless, waiting their doom,—stood the desolate stores and office buildings, destined to burn later that same night.

Some time between midnight and dawn, the fire, fanned by its own terrific draught, swept down upon the business district, and the

building in which Philip and Wilbur had their offices went up, like the rest, in smoke.

All day Wednesday and Thursday the conflagration raged. There seemed no checking it. When the flames leaped Van Ness Avenue, a particularly wide thoroughfare, everybody gave up hope. The residential section of the city, it was prophesied, would share the fate of the business district. San Francisco was doomed.

Philip's car was commandeered by the city authorities early the second morning, and he hauled dynamite tirelessly to the districts where buildings were to be blown up, until something went wrong with his engine, and he was obliged to abandon the machine in the path of the flames. When there was nothing more for him to do, and he was forced to watch idly the steady sweep of the fire, confidence began to desert him. With the rest of the townsfolk, he decided the city would inevitably be wiped out, and that safety lay only in flight. Wilbur urged him to come out to his house, which, being near the Presidio, was as yet far removed from danger, but Philip could not bring himself to consider deserting Mrs. Grotenberg. It struck him as an odd circumstance that at such a perilous time, neither Wilbur nor Lucy should know anything of his relations with this friend. He had never mentioned her to anyone, and his partner presumed he was still living at the *Abbey*. Now the woman's helplessness in the face of the menacing flames had its own appeal. It never occurred to him to abandon her.

Thursday night he slept soundly, worn out by the nervous exhaustion to which everyone was a prey. He and Mrs. Grotenberg decided that, when the morning broke, they would take what they could carry with them, and make for Golden Gate Park, but Friday's early hours brought the joyful tidings the conflagration was finally under control and was rapidly burning itself out.

It was another cloudless, scorching day; a murky blur overhung the city through which the sun's disk shone redly. A stench of things burned choked the atmosphere,—offensive, nauseous, the smell of the incinerator. The hills, with their blackened ruins, their seared and tragic monuments, their waste of cinders and charred embers, lay gaunt and stark, swimming in heat still lingering about them, the scarred isolated stacks and skeleton walls made more ghostly by spectral scarfs of white ash-smoke that constantly stirred and

billowed up around them. An appalling task, a herculean labor awaited the people of San Francisco. Not a single person among all Philip's acquaintances, or among those with whom he casually conversed, hesitated for a moment to undertake it.

§ 2.

The earthquake and fire had important results for Philip. The most immediate was a sudden boom in rental values along Fillmore Street. His private income was trebled over-night. A piano house leased the entire building he owned at a huge price. He reserved one of the small stores around the corner, facing the side street, and here he and Wilbur reëstablished themselves in a new office. He persuaded Mrs. Grotenberg to move across the bay to Berkeley. For a few weeks she lived in one of the cheap new frame hotels which had recently cropped up, mushroom-like, in the neighborhood of the University campus, but at the end of a month she moved into a shingled, peaked-roofed cottage that stood high on a hill above the college town, hiding itself behind a ragged cluster of thick pepper and acacia trees. It was a haven of peace and beauty for Philip to come to when he was worn out with the avalanche of work that now descended upon him.

During the past four years he had written a fair amount of fire insurance. The question now arose, were the fire and earthquake to be regarded as one and the same act of God,—in which case the insurance companies would be protected from loss, by virtue of a clause in their contracts providing for such disasters,—or was the fire a separate and distinct calamity? In the latter event they would have to pay. Some companies repudiated their obligations entirely, leaving the decision to the courts; a few acknowledged them in full and paid the face value of their policies; many compromised on seventy-five cents on the dollar; a less number offered to pay half. The business entailed an immense amount of correspondence, endless interviews with dissatisfied clients, troublesome negotiations. Philip was worn out by the end of every day. Two of the larger companies for whom he wrote insurance, sent adjusters to San Francisco to assist him and other agents, but these emissaries proved to be only a nuisance.

Wilbur Lansing was tremendously excited by the possibilities of the new state of things in the real estate market. More property changed hands in the three months following the fire than during the whole time that Baldwin & Lansing had been organized. Wilbur was among the first to see the temporary values suddenly created in property that lay along the edge of the burnt district, and he was able to secure some advantageous leases before the situation became generally apparent. Acting on his urgent advice, Philip wired his brother in Vacaville to borrow as much money as he could from Dermot Phelan and go immediately to Sacramento to buy all the building material he could find. Wilbur at once commenced to remodel the houses he had leased, adapting them for commercial needs, and erecting cheaply constructed stores on ground that had been made vacant by the fire. Rents climbed steadily.

"Cash in, now, while the going's good, Philip," was Wilbur's daily slogan. "There's a slump coming as sure as God made little apples. Why? Because where *one* house stood before the fire, apartment houses are going up, and twenty to thirty families eventually will be living on exactly the same number of square feet of ground formerly occupied by one. Just as soon as they begin building downtown again, I'm going to sell every square foot of dirt I own. That's your Uncle Dudley."

Philip was too much engrossed in adjusting his insurance claims to give much thought to real estate. He permitted Wilbur to handle that end of their enterprise without interference. He had been left by the fire with three or four useless pieces of property upon his hands, but his Fillmore Street building furnished an excellent income.

While affairs at the office kept him so busy, he was obliged to stay in the city one, two, sometimes three nights a week. He explained to Wilbur and Lucy he was living across the bay with Constance in Piedmont so as to see something of Paul. It would have been awkward to explain Mrs. Grotenberg. He shrank from exposing either himself or her to criticism. Their intimacy was their own affair. So far they had kept the matter of their relationship to themselves,—nobody knew,—and there was no reason to believe anyone would ever know. Mrs. Grotenberg stuck closely to her little peaked-roofed cabin, pottering about the garden, digging

up the weeds, raking the gravel path, watering her sickly carnations and struggling nasturtiums, and gave no time to her neighbors or held speech with them. Every morning she walked down to the markets and did her buying, paying cash for what she bought. During the long hours of her lonely day she planned but for one thing: Philip's return. What she should say to him, what she should do to amuse him, what she should give him to eat occupied her mind. She had a barrel of bottled beer sent out from Oakland —for Berkeley was a temperance town,—and the beer was always ready for him, chilled to just the pleasant temperature he liked.

When Philip worked late at the office, he did not cross the bay but spent the night at Wilbur's house. No matter what the hour of his arrival, he usually found his sister entertaining a few friends who had dropped in for the evening. Her home had been a popular refuge at the time of the fire. When it became apparent that the old *Pleasanton Hotel* lay in the direct path of the conflagration and was doomed to the fiery finish long predicted of it, Mrs. Perry Hoyt and old Mrs. Tom Carmichael came straight to Mrs. Lansing confident that their little protégée would take them in. Lucy liked having her house full of guests. There had been tremendous excitement in the air and she had responded vitally to it. She packed her rooms full of refugees. For a time there were as many as sixteen people under her roof. Philip, once or twice, had to sleep on the davenport in the living-room, there being no other bed available.

By the end of that year, however, the course of existence had resumed much of its customary air. There was talk of starting up the Greenways and *La Jeunesse,*—popular dances of the winter. benefits for charitable institutions that had suffered from the fire were arranged, backed by the city's best people; "Lady Windermere's Fan," and "Trelawney of the Wells" were presented by society amateurs; the theatres, accepting temporary quarters, opened their doors on uptown sites and were running full blast; the stone and steel buildings, of fireproof construction, had been repaired of the damage caused by the scorching, and were filled to capacity; reënforced concrete structures were everywhere rising on their former locations. Everybody had money to spend; the majority of people had received the greater part of their insurance, and this they were intent on squandering as fast as they could; jewels, pianos, luxuries

sold as never before, and society,—such as Lucy's rarefied group of intimates and acquaintances,—began again to entertain.

Philip encountered some of his sister's parties on the nights he stayed in the city. On the first of these occasions, when he arrived and found the drawing-room filled with people, he became alarmed and contemplated a late boat across the bay. But Lucy would not hear of his leaving. She linked her arm in his and drew him in; it was only a little bridge party; she wanted him to meet some of her guests, just a few of her best friends, who had happened in.

Affectionately hanging upon his arm and ignoring his protests, she urged him into her prettily lighted drawing-room where there were three busy tables of card-players and half-a-dozen onlookers.

"You know Miss Meriweather," Lucy said, introducing him. "Beckie,—this is my big brother, Mr. Baldwin; and this is Doctor Gordon and Mrs. Todd,—and Mrs. Perry Hoyt, I think you know,—and this is Miss Vale,—Miss Leila Vale,—and Gerald and Flossie Prentiss——"

Each one in turn smiled at him perfunctorily, the men getting up to grasp his hand. Philip suffered agonies of embarrassment. He was in his grimy business clothes, his hands and face were dirty, his hair ruffled. The women in his sister's drawing-room were elaborately costumed, the men immaculately attired. He mumbled conventionalities, conscious that his cheeks were flaming, his forehead and the palms of his hands moist with perspiration.

Firm, authoritative fingers were laid upon his sleeve. Miss Meriweather's ugly mannish face looked up at him and she smiled whimsically.

"Come here and sit down by me, you Philip-man," she commanded. "What are you scared of? I'll bet six bits you've done more real work to-day than this entire bunch of four-flushers collectively——"

"Aw, come off, Beckie!"

"Shut up, I'm talking!" she silenced the interruption autocratically. "Know anything 'bout this fool game?" she continued to Philip. "Leila Vale's doubled my four hearts,—the simpleton!"

"Well, I can't play it if you keep on talking!" Miss Vale protested.

"Come on," Miss Meriweather said to Philip, "let's go get a

drink. I'm dummy and I can't sit here and watch Leila bungle the hand." She pushed back her chair and rose, catching Philip's arm. "We'll go out to the dining-room. What you need is a long drink with a lot of ice!"

Philip welcomed the excuse to escape. He followed Miss Meriweather to the sideboard in the adjoining room where she mixed whiskey and siphon water, and drank with him, man fashion. This homely, stout, grey-haired woman with her brusque directness, put him immediately at his ease, and made him laugh. He was sorry when shrill cries from the card-table announced it was her deal, and she was obliged to leave him. He did not return to the drawing-room, however, but slipped upstairs to his room.

§ 3.

Lucy was intent upon drawing her brother into the circle of her friends, and she laid her plans adroitly, but he tried his best to circumvent them. He could not talk the easy give-and-take banter that came so readily to the lips of her group; he suffered in their company, was tongue-tied, awkward, and acutely self-conscious. But he was fond of his sister, and when she hugged his arm and laid her golden head against it, there was little she could ask that he was not willing to do for her, though it was impossible to feel at ease among her friends. He accepted one or two of her invitations to formal dinners, because she made a point of it, but he found the long evenings insufferable. He tried to talk, to listen, to smile and make himself agreeable, but it was of no use. He was convinced he was a bore, and constantly suspected the women thought him a fool. The few minutes he was permitted to loiter over his cigar and sip his coffee with the men at the end of the long-drawn-out meal were all he enjoyed.

Nor did Wilbur seem to get much pleasure out of these affairs. Philip presumed he endured them for Lucy's sake. He would sit smoking his cheap cigars, one after another, emptying his wine glass freely, fidgeting in his chair, playing with knives, forks and spoons, making little wet messes out of his cigar ash. Philip thought him high-strung, nervous; his eyes were blood-shot; he looked picked and lean; a bit of the wrapper from his cigar frequently stuck in the corner of his mouth; he dropped ashes in his lap and sometimes

spilled his food. Philip could guess what pressure he was under during these days,—pressure of worry and fear. Wilbur had many irons in the fire. His personal investments were numerous, and besides it was costing him a great deal to live. Lucy spent money with little consideration. She kept three servants; she entertained constantly; she exercised no curb upon the selection of her personal apparel; she maintained an automobile she drove herself; she was begging Wilbur for a limousine and a chauffeur. Philip did not know how his partner managed it.

§ 4.

After one of his sister's oppressive dinners, Philip would turn to the peacefulness of the Berkeley hills with a grateful sense of satisfaction. It was a delight to be welcomed by Mrs. Grotenberg. She always made a great fuss over him; she would have an excellent dinner ready; she would make him comfortable and contented.

Even as he descended from the train at the Berkeley station, he invariably experienced a feeling of relief. The turmoil of the ash-begrimed city with its gusty winds, and incinerator smell that still clung to it, was left behind. The warm evening, the repose of a well-ordered community, the stillness of the country, the softly stepping night stealing upon the heels of a sun-flooded day, burdened with the fragrance of the hills and flower gardens, met him gratefully, engulfing, caressing him. He always drew a great breath; the day's troublesome affairs and its hot pace were over; he was glad to think of the peace that awaited him.

If not too tired, he would walk from the station. The trolley robbed him of some of the sweetness and beauty of the evening. It was pleasant to make his way across the college campus, passing under the leviathan-armed oaks, meeting occasional belated students hurrying from laboratory or library. The gardens were filled with flowers, geraniums glowed redly in thick hedges, roses loaded the air prodigally with their scent. Appetizing odors of evening meals in process of preparation, stole from kitchens and mingled with the scents of the early night. Lawns were being watered; family groups gathered on porch steps, the women in white, the men smoking their pipes; children ran about playing games and calling shrilly to one

another. It was the twilight hour, with its cessation from work, its tranquillity. There was no hint here of streets filled with billowing ash-dust, the stink of stale fires, of sweat and labor.

Mrs. Grotenberg would be waiting for him by the foot of one of the drooping pepper trees. She had made a little seat for herself out of a couple of boards, and sometimes sat there watching for hours. He could see her white figure long before he reached the last steep ascent that led up to the cobbled steps and gravelled walk. The cabin sat back out of sight from the street behind a screen of trees. There were few houses near, and the street ended a hundred yards beyond. The thickly wooded surface of the hill rose sharply in its immediate rear. It was the edge of the town. The cabin with its peaked roof looked down from its eminence upon chimneys and house-tops, the greenery of trees and gardens, and the right-angled pathways of white streets, which sloped precipitately to the line of the railway, then slid smoothly out in bare flat lands to meet the shimmering surface of the bay. Beyond, the eye travelled past Alcatraz Island to the distant Heads and the golden red ball of sun, dipping toward evening to the serrated edge of the Presidio pine-covered hills. It was an eyrie perched high in solitude, a nest in the hills, a haven, a sanctuary.

Mrs. Grotenberg would not wait for him to come up. When she saw him, she would wave some fluttering white thing in her hand, call to him joyfully, and then speed away, up the gravel walk, catching up her skirts as she ran. Philip knew it was to her kitchen she flew. Something must be whisked into the oven; coals must be given a quick shake; the waiting sirloin must be clapped over the hot embers; the yellow batter poured into a sizzling frying-pan. Sometimes she would wait to meet him by the time he reached the doorway, to kiss him warmly, her arms in a quick hug about his neck, before she hurried back to her odorous kitchen and the surprise that was crisping brown in the oven. He must not be kept waiting an instant for his dinner; not a second must be lost; all day she had prepared herself for this moment.

The table would be set out on the porch, if by any chance he had promised to be home early. Then they would watch the sun set gloriously and the night shadows creep down the hill, stealthily to encircle them until only their pallid faces showed, the white

lustre of the table cloth, and the glowing tip of his cigar. Japanese bells,—strips of tinkling glass,—hung from the edge of the porch roof and clinked musically with any movement of the air; student songs,—young voices blending harmoniously,—reached them from below, and far off the faint screech of the electric trains pricked the silence. The velvety incense of the acacia trees scented the night delicately.

The light faded so rapidly it was not always possible to dine on the porch unless the meal began before sunset. Philip rarely was able to reach home early enough, and usually the table was spread within, where lamps were available when daylight disappeared. But the windows were always wide open, and the tinkle-tinkle of Japanese bells still reached them with other harmonious noises of the night. After supper, it was their custom to sit out on the worn wooden steps of the porch in the darkness and look out across the tangled lights of Berkeley at the purple drop of the star-strewn heavens.

The dinner was always delicious.

"I'll be hanged, Mrs. G.!" Philip would exclaim, inspecting a particularly appetizing dish, "I don't know how you do it, or where you get such ideas."

Pleasure would instantly darken her olive cheeks, and she would search for a change of subject, watching him covertly, to observe the look of satisfaction in the face she had come to know so well. She always urged him to have another helping, or was ready to get him another bottle of beer.

"No—no, Mrs. G., couldn't think of it," he would protest. "You feed me too well; I'm getting horribly fat! . . . Why, I weigh thirty pounds more than I used to!"

"Fat men are happy men," she would retort with a knowing air.

"Well, I won't touch another thing; I'm too full." He would blow out his cheeks and expel a breath of discomfort. "I guess I'll have my cigar."

Instantly she would be on her feet to bring him the box and matches.

"You sit right still, Phil. You're tired; you've had a long, hard day in that awful city; now's the time for you to rest. I

don't do a blessed thing here but just sit and think. I *love* to wait on you! You've been going it since morning."

"Well, I admit I had a pretty tough day to-day," he would agree. "The street-car broke down, and I had to tramp all the way back to the office, and there was a big crowd waiting——"

He would unbutton his vest and lift his feet into the seat of another chair, settling himself comfortably.

"Ah-h," he would breathe in satisfaction. "This is comfy. I tell you what, Mrs. G., you certainly know how to make a fellow feel at home."

Holding the match while he puffed a light, she might touch her lips lightly to his hair before she blew out the flame. Philip took no notice. He had grown used to her ways. He would be feeling sleepy and contented.

When he finished his cigar he would prepare to go to bed. He might have preferred to sleep alone, but he knew the suggestion would surely hurt Mrs. Grotenberg's feelings. He tried to be considerate of her. He would find the bed turned down, his pajamas carefully laid out. He liked to read for awhile before he went to sleep, and a popular magazine, in whose stories of adventure he had recently found amusement, would be ready on the bedside table supporting the oil lamp. After he was in bed, Mrs. Grotenberg would begin to clear away the dinner dishes, and putter about in the kitchen. There would be the sound of running water and a faint clatter of plates and pans. The noise, muffled by the closed doors, would increase his drowsiness; he liked to listen to it. Presently the magazine would slip from his hand and tumble to the floor. He would never know just the moment he went to sleep or when Mrs. Grotenberg would turn out the lamp, and creep to bed beside him.

She would be up when he awoke. She was always astir long before him. He would feel delightfully drowsy, pleasantly enjoying the process of slowly regaining consciousness. The sun would be striking obliquely across the room from the tiny east window, the Japanese bells would be tinkling merrily; from the kitchen would come the sound of eggs being furiously whipped, the bang of the oven door, the entrancing odor of rolls baking. He would find his clothes carefully arranged on a chair beside the bed, his

linen fresh, studs and buttons changed to a new shirt, his trousers pressed. Mrs. Grotenberg always ironed his trousers for him and kept his clothes brushed and on hangers in the small closet. He would think gratefully how good and kind she was, then turn over for a few minutes further sleep, before she came to call him.

§ 5.

Lucy invited him to spend Christmas with her. There was to be an elaborate dinner party on Christmas Eve, followed by a dance in the ballroom of the new *Palace Hotel,* a wooden structure, hastily erected, devised to meet temporary needs. Philip declined; it meant leaving Mrs. Grotenberg by herself. She was a sentimental creature, and Christmas and other holidays meant a great deal to her. He knew she would be grievously disappointed if he deserted her on this night of nights. She would not upbraid him; she would utter no word of protest; but she would cry,—cry half the night!

Already he had had one experience of this kind with her, and he had sworn, then, he would never again desert her on a holiday. The occasion had been Thanksgiving Day. Lucy had invited a dozen people to dinner, and she had begged him so hard to come, he had weakly promised. When he broke the news to Mrs. Grotenberg, the stricken look on her face haunted him during the intervening days, during the party, and for some time afterwards. She had bought a live turkey, and had been fattening the bird. He had seen the strutting creature pecking about the yard, tied by the leg with a long string. All her plans had to be abandoned. Philip knew that she ate no dinner herself, but spent the holiday in bed. Her face had been drawn and white when next he saw her, with puffed swollen spots of red about her eyes; she had actually lost weight. What made her grief particularly distressing to him was the earnest way she attempted to hide it. Her efforts were pathetic, hopelessly inadequate. He suspected she was jealous, as well as disappointed. There was no reason for her to cherish resentment towards Lucy, except that his sister represented the only interest he had outside of herself. When Philip described to her the few dinners he had had at Lucy's house, Mrs. Grotenberg displayed a sharp curiosity. She was interested in the smallest details, par-

ticularly anxious to hear about the women who had been there. I did not occur to him at the time that she might be jealous; h recognized the fact too late. He had tried to convince her, tried t assure her that she had no occasion to trouble herself about Luc or any of the "stylish" people he met at her house. She woul evade the discussion, assuring him brightly she was not in the leas jealous, that it was absurd for him to think so. It was quite natura she declared, that he should want to go to see his sister.

The fact that both Wilbur and Lucy supposed him to be livin in Piedmont with Constance, her husband, and his own small son frequently led to embarrassing situations. In talking with the Lan sings, he referred to Mrs. Grotenberg always as "Constance," an Lucy sometimes sent messages to "Constance" or suggested tha "Constance" bring Paul over to the city some day so that she migh have a party for him. Philip was compelled to prevaricate, to inven excuses, to concoct the most elaborate fictions. In the matter of th Christmas dinner for which Lucy wanted him, he was caught i attributing to Constance Mrs. Grotenberg's particular feelings, an was startled to find himself explaining to his sister how hurt Con stance would be if he did not come home.

"You see how it is, Lucy. I can't desert her. She's planne everything all out,—and—and she'll be awfully upset if I'm no there."

"But she's got her own husband, Phil! She isn't in love with *you* is she?"

"Good Heavens, no!" he said hastily.

"I can't see why she wants you Christmas Eve and Christma night *both*," Lucy persisted. "Why can't she let you off Christma Eve for my party?"

"Well—there's—there's the kid's tree," Philip floundered.

"Now listen to me, Phil! I'm going to send something reall lovely over to Paul, and your sister-in-law can hang it on his tre and she can arrange for the dinner and the Christmas fun o Christmas Day. . . . But I want you for Christmas *Eve*. Pleas Philip,—say you'll come. Leila Vale's crazy about you,—think you're the handsomest thing,—and I want to put you next her. . . ."

A quick vision of Mrs. Grotenberg's swimming eyes came to him.

"I can't—I really *can't* do it, Lucy!" he said emphatically. "You mustn't ask me,—get someone else."

His sister eyed him with cold suspicion.

"I honestly believe," she enunciated slowly, studying his face, "that your good little sister-in-law has got a case on you."

Philip felt the blood beat up into his face.

"No,—no,—that's nonsense, Lucy. You should see Connie and her husband. She's crazy about him; thinks the sun rises and sets with him."

His sister was not convinced.

"You ought to get married," she commented. "You're making heaps of money,—oh, I know, Wilbur's told me,—and it isn't safe for a good-looking big man like you with lots of money to be 'round loose. Some hussy's sure to grab you, and then I'll lose my brother again, the way I did before!"

Philip laughed joyously.

"I'm getting too fat," he declared.

"You *are* getting a little stout, but you carry it well. You keep your shoulders and back straight without sticking your tum out in front of you the way fat men always seem to enjoy doing. Beckie says 'everybody loves a fat man!' I hadn't heard it before. Isn't she a scream?"

Philip compromised with his sister, and promised if she would let him off the Christmas festivities, he would positively agree to motor down to Del Monte with her a week later and be one of the party that planned to spend New Year's at the hotel. They were to go down a day or so beforehand; the last night of the year promised to be a gay occasion.

But with even this arrangement, Mrs. Grotenberg was hurt. She took no account of the fact that Philip was to be with her both for Christmas and Christmas Eve and that he had had a hard time managing it. When he spoke of the Del Monte visit, her fine eyes filmed, he saw her catch a trembling under lip, as she turned her head away quickly.

"I'm sure you'll have a lovely time," she said with forced cheerfulness, but she clipped the last words off abruptly and hurried to the kitchen where, Philip knew, she gave way to her tears, burying her face in her apron, pressing it hard against her mouth, lest the sound of a sob should escape her.

"Damn!" he said forcibly. Mrs. G. was sometimes exasperatingly unreasonable.

§ 6.

Lucy, Philip and Leila Vale had had the limousine to themselves throughout the pleasant four hours occupied by the run to Del Monte. Wilbur drove the other car, with Beckie Meriweather beside him and Gerald and Flossie Prentiss in the back seat. Others were coming down by train. Philip was amused at the way his small sister had determined that he and Miss Vale should become interested in one another. They sat together, Philip between the two women, and Lucy kept the conversation alive by asking Philip to recite various boyhood experiences to interest Leila, drawing out his opinions on local politics, on the real estate situation, on Roosevelt's latest drastic action. Similarly she prompted the girl.

Miss Vale was not in any way the type of woman to which Philip was drawn. He judged her to be over thirty,—a year or two older than himself. Her worldly wisdom and frank sophistication impressed him unpleasantly. She was handsome, a trifle bold, ultra-fashionable. Her clothes, although plain and severe, she wore dashingly. She had straw-colored hair, the same toned brows and lashes and a fine tawny down covered cheeks, lips and neck. Her complexion was extraordinarily vivid, almost brick red, changing to flaming crimson at the least provocation. Her eyes were wonderfully expressive, and she had a way of fluttering her lashes, arching her brows, and looking out from between narrowed lids, that suggested stirred emotion. But she worked this artful mannerism too frequently, with insufficient provocation; it put Philip on his guard vaguely he was aware of the many men preceding him on whom she had already practised these ocular blandishments. She smoked constantly as she lounged luxuriously against the upholstery of the car, flipping her cigarette ash out of the lowered window.

It was not difficult to talk to her. A string of words was always on her lips and she had a quick way of vigorously laughing at Philip's slightest venture in humor that encouraged him and made him feel at ease. Her face grew vividly red when she laughed. He was undecided whether she really found him amusing or whether it was just her manner with men in general. Whatever the motive he found it gratifying, and was persuaded to enlarge upon his sportiveness. Several times he surprised himself by his waggishness. Lucy vented her hilarity in little piping cries; Leila Vale rocked back and forth, holding her mirth silently, a choking redness congesting her face.

"Why, Philip Baldwin!" his sister cried. "You're a regular cut-up! I never knew you to be so funny! . . . I've suspected you of many things, but never of being funny!"

Philip grinned boyishly, embarrassed, but he was greatly pleased with himself.

"The man will be the death of me!" Leila Vale asserted.

§ 7.

Waves of disturbing memories came sweeping back to him as he rolled up the door of the hotel. It was close to ten years since he had come jouncing up in the hotel stage to that very portal, an awestruck, self-conscious bridegroom with Marjorie in her new snug little brown hat pulled over her black curls. It was hard to think of himself as the same person. His lip twisted with a touch of the old bitterness when he thought of how she had treated him, how he had endured all her whims, how he had humored her! He remembered the way he had showed off his strength to her up in their room, chinning himself to the frame of the bathroom door, and lifting the furniture with one hand. What a big bumpkin he had been! What a kid!—what an *ass!*

§ 8.

The three days at Del Monte were a tremendous success, everyone agreed. There were just twelve in their immediate party, but half the guests of the hotel were known to one or another of their

group. Motor cars were much in demand for drives along the ocean cliffs; the ladies knocked croquet balls about over the close clipped lawns, the men shoved iron weights from end to end on sandy shuffle boards on the verandas; Philip suggested a bowling match, but the general opinion was that this game was too strenuous, and that bridge was more amusing. Cards occupied the late afternoons and most of the evenings. Lucy and Leila Vale undertook to teach Philip how to play bridge, as he was needed to make up the third table. His mind worked tardily in grasping details of games, and Leila Vale would have given him up in despair had it not been for Lucy's dogged determination that he should master it. She had her own reasons for persistency. Wilbur, a bridge enthusiast, was called in to assist, and from painstaking and point-by-point instruction, Philip gradually grasped its rudiments.

On New Year's Eve there was a big dinner at the hotel, followed by an elaborate ball. A great deal of champagne was served, and Philip was surprised to observe how freely the women drank. Lucy only sipped her glass, but Beckie Meriweather and the others absorbed astonishing quantities, seemingly without effect. He himself became aware that the lights were blurred and iridescent, and that he was having a marvellously good time. Leila Vale, in whose company he found himself continually, he decided was a most fascinating creature. She aggravated him by the way she fluttered her eyes at him; he followed her about the verandas and corridors he wanted to have a long talk with her, tell her how much he liked her, assure her he had never regarded her with suspicion. She evaded him by moving away just as he began to speak to her, luring him on to pursue her, tantalizing him with backward glances over her bare shoulder, provoking, inviting, significant. She made him angry by the way she eluded him.

The following afternoon, the party decided to motor home. They were late in getting started, and the delayed departure meant arriving in the city after dark. Beckie Meriweather urged everybody to spend the night at her country place in Burlingame.

"The servants will have gone out, but Hing will get us something," she said. "There's enough food of some sort, and the boy can rustle up the booze. We can have some decent bridge without any damned music to bother us."

Philip thought distressfully of Mrs. Grotenberg. He had promised her he would be home, but there was nothing he could do toward getting back to San Francisco alone. He was obliged to accept the others' decision. She seemed a long way from him, after three days with his sister's friends and the hilarious time they had had. He had reached the conclusion he liked these new people; he was at home among them now; they treated him familiarly, put him at his ease. Beckie Meriweather amused him, Leila Vale fascinated him, and he was absorbed by this game they had taught him. He dismissed Mrs. Grotenberg from his thoughts, and spent a merry Saturday and Sunday in Beckie's rambling, roomy bungalow. They played bridge almost without cessation, and Philip, who was blessed with beginner's luck, won steadily.

The return to San Francisco was made on Sunday afternoon. That night in the city Philip stayed over at Wilbur's and Lucy's home. To manufacture a plausible reason why he should cross the bay immediately after reaching San Francisco, involved too great a tax upon his ingenuity. Leila Vale was also Lucy's guest until morning, and this made it additionally difficult for him to get away. They all took it for granted he was going to stay; he had not the courage to combat the torrent of expostulations he knew an announcement of departure would bring down upon his head.

It was not until Monday night that he climbed the last steep grade to the cabin among the acacia and pepper trees in the Berkeley hills. Mrs. Grotenberg was not in her accustomed seat at the base of the ragged trunk, but he reminded himself she was expecting him at no definite hour. He was nevertheless vaguely uneasy.

He found her in bed; she had been sick almost the whole time he had been away. She looked wan and wasted; her eyes were sunken, her sallow skin the color of gray putty. She made an obvious effort to appear bright when he came in, and his voice and heavy step brought color to her cheek. But he could see that she had been ill; she was haggard, and the stamp of pain was on her face.

"It's *nothing*, Flip. I'm *all right*. I've just been resting here a bit; there's been a stupid pain in my side, but it eases it up a little when I lie down. . . . It's all gone now; I've had it for years. Nothing but indigestion, I assure you. . . . But there isn't

any *kind* of a dinner for you, Flip! You see,—I wasn't sure you were coming, and,—and I've been sort of good-for-nothing. But I'll get up right away, and in half-an-hour I'll have something nice for you——"

She pulled herself to the bed's edge as she spoke, and sitting on its edge, felt about with her feet for her slippers. Suddenly she gave a little gasp, her eyes spread wide, and for a moment she held herself rigid, one hand clapped against her side. At once Philip had his arm about her.

"Why, Mrs. G.!—you're *sick!*"

"No—no, Flip!" she whispered, fighting pain. "I know what it is,—just indigestion. I tell you I've had this—oh, ever since I went with Mrs. Harper. It's no more than acute indigestion. I ate some pie,—I made it for you when you were here, remember?—and I can't digest things like that. . . . Don't get excited, Flip. I tell you it's *nothing!*"

"I'm going to get a doctor for you right away," he said, frowning.

Mrs. Grotenberg's face turned ashen; she wheeled upon him with flashing eyes.

"No—you—*won't!* I won't *have* a doctor! . . . Philip,—you go out of that door after a doctor and I'll not be here when you come back. And if you bring one here, I swear to you, I'll take my own life!"

Philip was astonished. He had never seen her so roused.

"All right—all right," he hastened to reassure her. "You lie down there and tell me what to bring you. I can take care of you."

Mrs. Grotenberg's eyes closed a moment and when she opened them they were swimming with tears.

"You're so good to me, Flip. You're always so gentle,—always so kind."

"Come on, now,—what can I get you?"

"Oh—nothing. I'm all right now,—*truly*. I haven't a pain in my body. I'm only thinking about your dinner."

"Ah—forget it. I can get myself something real fancy. Don't worry."

He managed for himself without difficulty. A half-demolished

leg of lamb was in the ice-box and he whittled it down to the white bone; then he boiled a can of beans, and dumped the smoking contents into a soup plate, carrying these dishes and a cold bottle of beer to her bedside, to eat his dinner there, setting the plates on the seat of a chair close at hand, while he squatted before it in a low rocker. He amused her, while he ate, with an account of the trip.

She wanted to hear about the women.

"How old is Miss Meriweather?"

"She's forty, I should say; guess she's over that."

"Is she pretty—good looking?"

Philip guffawed. "She's 'bout as pretty as an old roan mare. Beckie's got lots of good points, but beauty's not among them."

His companion was not satisfied; she persisted in questioning him. Presently her curiosity centred upon Leila Vale. Philip's interest in his sister's friend was so transient, there was no occasion to dissemble. He gave what he thought was rather an amusing description of her, imitating in clumsy fashion some of her affectations. He assured Mrs. Grotenberg he did not like her, but at this she sniffed.

"Oh-h, that's sure-fire true, Mrs. G.; it's a fact, and I mean it. She isn't a *bit* my sort. I wouldn't trust her 'round the corner. She wants to flirt,—I'll admit that,—but,—gosh!—*I* don't know how to flirt, and I wouldn't if I could. I tell you, she means less than nothing to me. I wouldn't give a hang if I never clapped eyes on her again."

It was clear, however, that Mrs. Grotenberg was not convinced. He decided Lucy's "gang"—as he thought of them—weren't worth upsetting Mrs. G. He determined he wouldn't see any more of them for a good long time. He could understand how Mrs. G. felt about it: she was lonesome; she thought a lot of him, and, of course, she got jealous and fanciful, imagined Lucy and her friends were trying to get him away from her. Besides she was sick, and he did not want her to be distressed.

§ 8.

During the night, Mrs. Grotenberg had another sharp seizure, and Philip was alarmed. But in the morning she seemed consid-

erably better, and when he came home in the evening, she was waiting for him at her seat under the drooping pepper tree, and had a delicious dinner ready for him.

When he had leisurely finished it, and had stretched out his big proportions comfortably, his vest unbuttoned, a cigar between his teeth, a tall glass of cold beer at his elbow, he decided that such comfort was preferable in every way to pursuing Leila Vale about the corridors and parlors of the Hotel del Monte, pretending an interest in her he did not feel.

Yet when he encountered Miss Vale with his sister a week or so later, he experienced the disquieting sensation that Mrs. Grotenberg was a good deal of an encumbrance. He had avoided seeing or communicating with Lucy, though she had telephoned, had asked him to tea, to play bridge, to dine with her. An important business transaction had come up by which he, personally, would make a lot of money, if it was consummated, and he pleaded this as a reason for being excused. The deal involved the sale of certain realty holdings near the newly proposed Civic Centre,—two lots of property he had considered of little value since the fire.

Lucy, however, was not to be denied. She walked into Philip's office one afternoon in company with Leila Vale, and carried him off for tea to one of the big hotels, recently opened up on its old site. He had laughingly protested when they had invaded his office, trying to convince them he had a pressing engagement at four o'clock, but they had linked their arms in his, and dragged him along. When it became necessary for him to leave in order to catch the five-twenty boat, on which he had faithfully promised Mrs. Grotenberg to come home, difficulties arose.

Lucy had left him sitting with Leila Vale over the tea and cigarettes. She had excused herself,—she would be back in a minute —she had some telephoning to do. The better part of half-an-hour elapsed before she reappeared. When the moment arrived at which he should have departed, Philip did not have the courage to leave Miss Vale sitting at the table alone. It would have been unpardonably rude, he thought, and further, he did not know how to accomplish it.

When his sister rejoined them she was full of excitement. Gerald and Flossie Prentiss were giving a dinner party for

Cecilia Rhoda, a clever comic opera star at the *Princess*; they were dashing on to get Beckie, as they would have to dine early on account of the performance; they were all to fill a box at the theatre later, and Lucy had promised both Leila and Philip would come.

Miss Vale was immediately enthusiastic, but Philip, glancing at his watch, scowled. He had missed the five-twenty; he was too late even for the six o'clock boat. He knew Mrs. Grotenberg would be disappointed; she would be hurt and tearful. Late though it was, he would have to leave, even though it meant to encounter silent reproaches and swimming eyes.

"I'm sorry, Lucy,—I *can't;* I got to go right now. I'm awfully late as it is."

"But, Phil—*Phil!*" Lucy stamped her foot. "I—I . . . Oh, you make me so *mad!* Will you tell me *why* you can't come? What's the reason?"

"I promised I'd be home early. Connie—Constance expects me. I promised I'd be home early."

His sister studied him coldly, her red lips firmly pressed together.

"I don't believe you! You can't tell me that if you telephoned now and told her you wanted to stay in town, to go to dinner and the theatre with your own sister and some friends, she or anyone would make a fuss! . . . Why you act as if you were scart of something, Phil!"

He indulged in a nervous laugh.

"You don't understand, Lucy. . . . You see, I promised I'd be home at a certain hour. She's got something fancy cooked for me that will spoil if she keeps it waiting——"

"But you're late *anyhow,* Phil!"

"I know," he agreed, troubled.

"Oh, *do* stay, Philip," Leila Vale said, adding her entreating voice to his sister's arguments; her finger-tips touched his hand. "I wish you would stay; we're sure to have fun."

He wanted to stay. He looked down into her appealing face; the warm dark eyes, somnolent, significant, were all but shut between narrowed lids; her lips trembled, she arched her brows, her fingers linked themselves with his. His blood was stirred for the first time; he felt the heat of it pulsing rhythmically in his

neck. Certainly the prospect of dinner and theatre with Lucy and her friends, in the society of lovely Leila Vale, was more appealing than a dreary trip to Berkeley in the dark, a long walk up from the station, to be met by injured feelings.

But he deliberately shut out the alluring face, abruptly closing his eyes. He drew back and turned sharply toward his sister.

"You'll have to let me off, to-night. I'm *awfully* sorry. I've really got to go."

He rose and took their hands perfunctorily.

"Good-night," he said hurriedly. He dared not meet his sister's furious glance or the hurt, disappointed look in Leila's eyes.

CHAPTER V.

§ 1.

In March, Baldwin & Lansing moved downtown to occupy a temporary building erected on the site of their former offices on Post Street. With amazing rapidity, the business district was resuming some of its old appearance and much of its former activity. Baldwin & Lansing's move had been hurried by the sale of the corner Philip owned on Fillmore Street, to the piano concern.

"The bottom's going to drop out of this market, sure's you're alive," Wilbur predicted, in urging him to sell. "Cash in when you can."

Philip sold his corner at a big profit. His speculations had invariably proved advantageous; he had been extraordinarily lucky. As his personal expenditures were insignificant compared to his income, his revenues steadily accumulated; one day he realized with satisfaction he could reasonably regard himself as a rich man. Just how much he had invested in stock, bonds and other sound securities, he kept to himself. Wilbur was always boasting about his own shrewd deals, his wise investments and easy profits. Philip said little, but occasionally let slip some trifling evidence showing that he, too, had made money. As even the small establishment he maintained for Mrs. Grotenberg was kept secret, there was nothing to show that he spent anything at all. Wilbur believed him to be worth a great deal more than actually he was. He was proud of his partner's success and wealth, and he did not hesitate to boast about them. Elaborating upon Philip's prosperity afforded him excellent opportunity to convey the impression that he had been equally fortunate. Discussing the neat "pile" his partner had "put away," became a favorite topic.

"How much do you suppose Phil's really worth?" Wilbur's wife inquired of him one day.

Her husband threw out his hands expressively, and shifted the black weed in his mouth.

"Oh-h,"—he hung upon the monosyllable,—"quarter of a million."

"*Quarter of a million!*" gasped Lucy. She stared at her husband, her mouth open; she was astounded.

"Um—hum,—every penny. . . . It rolls up when you don't have to spend it. You can't save the way we throw it 'round. I'm forced to speculate,—take long chances to keep us going; they don't always turn out right."

"Oh, please don't begin that old song," Lucy said petulantly. "You spend more than I do——"

"*How* do I?"

"——and you urged me to spend money from the very first. We *have* to entertain, don't we? You're always talking about 'keeping up our end.' . . . Really, Wilbur,—haven't we been over this often enough?"

Her husband knocked his cigar ashes into his drinking tumbler and rose abruptly from the table.

"Well,—I get damned little out of it," he said sullenly, and stalked from the room.

§ 2.

An intimacy sprang up between Philip and Leila Vale, which the former commenced to find both stimulating and agreeable. His friendship for this fascinating society woman was much in the nature of a pleasant comradeship; he liked to talk to her, he liked to go about with her, he liked to be seen with her. At times there was little about her that was even remotely feminine; at others she was all sex. Either way she fascinated him. He often wondered how a woman so attractive and clever had reached the age of thirty,—or whatever she was,—without having married. She would make a splendid and handsome wife, but he never thought of her in that relationship to himself. His marrying days were over, and in any case there was Mrs. Grotenberg.

"Why did you never marry, Leila?" he asked her bluntly one day. She blew a fine plume of smoke into the air, and gazed re

flectively at the vine-draped, latticed ceiling of the brilliantly-lit restaurant where they were having supper. They had been to the theatre and had stopped for a bite and some beer before he took her home.

"I guess the right man never came along," she said musingly. "There must have been *someone?*"

"Oh, there were men—lots of 'em," she admitted with a laugh. "I've always had a beau. Perhaps I was too exacting." Color flooded her face. "I'm always in love."

"With one special man?"

She laughed again. Philip thought her decidedly pretty when she threw back her yellow head to vent her mirth; she had a trick of showing the red tip of her tongue between her shining teeth whenever she laughed; there was an infectious note of gaiety in her hilarity.

"Heavens—no! . . . I'm afraid I couldn't count them."

"But wasn't there one in particular?" he persisted.

The blood reddened her cheeks; her lips and eyebrows twitched; she gazed at Philip through narrowed lids pensively.

"Yes,—there was *one,*" she admitted. "But it's so long ago . . . I was eighteen, and he was a chaplain in the Navy. . . . Imagine"—her voice pealed out in derisive merriment—"imagine —a *minister!*"

"Well, what was the matter with that?"

"Oh,—a bit incongruous, don't you think? . . . No, I didn't mind his being a clergyman; he was really very decent. But, my dear,—the man got a hundred and fifty,—two hundred, whatever it was,—a month! I couldn't live on that! . . . And it was all we would have had!"

"I married on half as much," Philip remarked.

"Well," drawled Leila with a moment's frown, "your wife couldn't stand it."

He experienced a vague hurt.

"Money was not the main trouble between my wife and me. It was more fundamental than that. It was like boxing up a dog and a cat together and expecting them to get along peaceably."

"I couldn't be happy with *any* man unless I was comfortable," Leila asserted with spirit. "I've got to live decently and dress

decently. I wasn't brought up to be a poor man's wife; m
mother worked her fingers to the bone so that I should marry wel
I've got the essential qualifications, I think; I'm not going
throw 'em away on a poor man. No love in a cottage for mine

Philip was entertained by her earnestness.

"Marriage is woman's business," Leila went on. "It's t
great adventure of her life, and she has only one choice to mak
A woman gets a divorce, tries to rectify an error, and she
marked for life; the women whisper every time her name
mentioned: 'You know she's divorced; this is her *second* husband
The oftener a man marries, the more interesting society fin
him! It's true. I may have been over-cautious, but at least I'
not crying my eyes out because I have to decide between a ne
hat for myself and shoes for my husband. . . . A woman has
think long and carefully before she leaps into matrimony. Wh
she marries she gives all she's got. But it isn't so with the ma
if he doesn't like his bargain, he walks out of the house, an
tries it on somewheres else."

"You're too bitter, Leila."

Her lips twitched in characteristic fashion, and she looke
down at the table for a moment in silence. When she resume
her voice was in a lower key.

"Perhaps I am, Phil. . . . You always get me talking abo
myself. Let's change the subject. . . . Why don't you let me s
that boy of yours to whom you're so devoted? I'm awfully fon
of youngsters. How old is he now?"

"Paul?" Philip considered. "Paul's eight."

"Won't you bring him over some morning and let him spen
the day with me? I adore kiddies."

He promised, indefinitely. It occurred to him he had n
been to see Constance or his son for a long while.

He kissed Leila Vale for the first time that night when he le
her. She stood on the lower step of the stairs that led up
the vestibule of the dark little flat wherein she lived by herse
and slipped a small white gloved hand about his neck, drew h
head toward her, and placed her lips to his. Philip's pulse leap
with the soft pressure of her trembling mouth, and he caught h
roughly in his arms. She fled from him with a gasp when

released her, and ran up the stairs. At the landing above she hesitated a moment, half turned toward him again, then threw him a kiss from the tips of her fingers.

§ 3.

"Philip," Lucy said, coming to perch on the arm of his chair, "I want seriously to talk to you. . . . Why don't you marry Leila Vale?"

His sister had telephoned early in the morning and had made him promise to come out and lunch with her. All through the meal she had been her most engaging self, showing him the little-girl side of her he loved most. She was full of gossip about Rosemary and Harry; she had had a long letter from them the previous day; the mother and the Judge were both well, and Rosemary was going to have another baby. Lucy pretended to be scandalized. But her question, now, showed that the pleasant lunch, her affectionate efforts to amuse her brother, were all part of a carefully devised scheme to cajole him into a mood for the amiable consideration of her match-making plans. He nodded his head at her, knowingly, a broad grin upon his lips.

"So—*that's* it!" he said. "And why pray, Mrs. Fix-it, do you desire me to marry Leila Vale?"

"Well, there's every reason, Phil; lots of them. In the first place you're not happy; I know you're not. You're living a wretched sort of existence; you have no family, no home, nothing. Crossing the bay every night is an awful nuisance; there's no necessity for it. You ought to have a lovely home out here near us. . . . Then again, you're not the kind of a man that can get along without having someone to look after you. You're just like Pa,—and some woman's bound to get hold of you and make a fool of you. . . . Oh, you can laugh, Philip Baldwin, all you want to, but I know you like a book, and you're like putty in a woman's hands. Now, Leila Vale's suited to you in every way. She's beautiful, she's got style, she knows just how to do things, she's popular, she's clever, and has a real position here in society. Beckie Meriweather's her cousin and Beckie says——"

Philip's brows contracted in surprise.

"Her cousin? Why, I didn't know that. I've never heard they were related."

"Then you're the only person that *doesn't* know it! How do you suppose Leila gets along? She hasn't got a penny of her own, and has a dreadful time making ends meet."

He was interested.

"You'd never think it," he commented.

"Well, *would* you? That's one of the wonderful things about Leila. She's got courage,—that girl has. I've never known her to complain about anything. She does social work for Beckie, and sometimes I and one or two of the others, have something we can pay her for doing, like lists and things, and occasionally she gets up children's parties, plans the games and makes the favors, you know. Beckie's a little mean to her, I think; she gives Leila an allowance, of course, but it isn't half enough and Beckie could make it three times as much if she wanted to. I often wonder how Leila manages. . . . Now she likes you an *awful* lot,—she's told me so,—and I think she'd work awfully hard to—to please you, and really make a success of your married life. She knows all sorts of the right people, and with your money back of her, she could pick and choose. . . . Phil,—it would be the sanest thing you ever did in your life."

She paused to study her brother's face, but he did not answer. He was trying to think of Leila Vale as his wife.

"Phil, dear,"—Lucy slipped from the chair-arm to his knee and wound her arm around his neck,—"does that girl,—does Mary Rowland still mean so much to you?"

Philip's face flamed. That name out of the past was like a twinge of an old wound.

"Listen, Phil," Lucy went on hurriedly. "I want to tell you something: you remember old Mrs. Tom Carmichael who lived at the *Pleasanton?* She's in London, now, working for suffrage, you know, and she met Mrs. Rowland one day on the street. I had a letter from her a few days ago. She asked Mrs. Rowland about her daughter, and her daughter, Mrs. Rowland said, had—had joined the Carmelites! . . . Phil, I'm awfully sorry,—I didn't know you'd feel so badly. I *had* to tell you,—I felt you *ought* to know about it, and that if any hope of her stood in the way of

your marrying Leila, you could put it forever and ever behind you——"

Lucy's voice went on in anxious explanation, but Philip did not listen. He saw suddenly Mary's tall statuesque figure, the linked hands, the downcast eyes, the pale noble countenance, the aristocratic profile. It was like her to become a nun; it was just the thing she would decide to do. A Carmelite, shut irrevocably from the world, and from him! With calm deliberation she had chosen the contemplative life to escape her own weakness, to put between herself and temptation an impassable barrier.

§ 4.

There was clearly a conspiracy afoot that he should marry Leila Vale. Beckie Meriweather gave a house party at her home in Burlingame, and throughout it, her cousin and Philip were paired off conspicuously with one another. Facetious Gerald Prentiss commented waggishly upon the possibility of the union; Wilbur asked him outright whether or not he was going to propose.

Philip was irritated. He liked Leila Vale a great deal; he admired her, she piqued and fascinated him; her quick wit, her shrewdness, her nimble-mindedness excited him. There were times when she stood close to him, her round bare arm touching his shoulder, when her finger-tips sought his hand, when she gazed intently into his eyes through narrowed lids, her lips slightly quivering as if inviting the pressure of his own, when her yellow hair brushed his cheek, and a delicate feminine odor, innately hers, filled his nostrils, that the blood beat heavily in his temples and neck, and he was thrilled with a great desire to catch her in his arms, and crush her in a terrible embrace, squeezing her mightily, until her vitality was spent. Yet he knew she was deliberately flirting with him, teasing him; he thought of her as a devil, a witch, whose taming would be a highly agreeable experience. The idea of marrying her had its allurements. Good-naturedly, at first, he entertained it, permitting himself leisurely to consider it; the thought intrigued him. He fancied himself her husband, her-she his wife,—the two taking their place in this merry group of his sister's friends as Mr. and Mrs. Philip Baldwin. The

picture was not unattractive, but he had no intention of makin up his mind in a hurry; he was content to think about it leisurel Lucy and her fellow-conspirators, on the other hand, were n inclined to let him hesitate; they were eager to have him commi himself; they wanted the matter decided.

Late the last night but one of Beckie's house-party, as h was undressing for bed, it suddenly occurred to him for the firs time what marrying Leila Vale would mean to Mrs. Grotenberg He was sitting on the side of the bed, wrestling with his shoe grunting as he bent over to loosen the tight lacings. Now, as th thought of Mrs. Grotenberg came to him, he straightened u slowly to gaze fixedly in front of him.

For a long time he sat thus, half-undressed, upon the edge o the bed, his hands clasping his knees, his jaw stiffly set. Grad ually the awkwardness of the situation unfolded itself before him and he saw the hideous predicament in which he had becom involved. The dominant emotion that rose strong and instan within him was vigorous rebellion. He beheld in Lucy's an Leila's machinations only the hurt they contained for Mrs Grotenberg. He could not bring himself to be a party to it; h could not be so unkind, so cruel, so cold-bloodedly selfish. H had a warm affection for Mrs. Grotenberg; she was his friend; h had taken care of her, provided for her; she *belonged* to him. I the first moment of reaction, he said to himself, he could mor easily strike her than inflict such suffering as his marriage to an other women would mean for her. He rebelled; he rebelle violently. The very atmosphere of Beckie's house as pale daw crept upon the world, dispelling the night, stealing from tree t bush and from bush to shrub across the misty garden beneath hi window, seemed repugnant, unbearable. He wanted to escape he wanted to think things over for himself; he wanted to ge back to Mrs. Grotenberg.

Impatiently he endured the succeeding day. His wakeful nigh gave him an excuse for an uncommunicative mood. He shunne Leila, avoided being alone with her, dared not trust himself t meet her glance. He was alarmed to discover the hold she ha upon his senses.

He felt the stage was being carefully set for him that evening

They expected him to propose. If he stayed, he knew well he would commit himself. Instinct prompted him; he was past reasoning. He had reached the point where he was powerless to resist Leila's fascinations. She could make him do as she chose. Safety lay only in flight.

He complained of a toothache. Clumsily he held his palm to his jaw and affected a scowl of pain. Leila brought him cloves, Beckie a half pony of brandy, Lucy, he fancied, regarded him with suspicion. In desperation,—at a moment when he was alone with Wilbur,—he turned appealingly to him.

"For God's sake,—get me out of this," he said. "Drive me over to the station,—now,—right this minute. . . . Tell 'em anything you please; tell 'em my tooth's setting me crazy, and—and I just *had* to go. God,—I *got* to get away! I'll explain everything to you some day soon,—only if you're my *friend*, help me to get away now."

One of the most satisfactory qualities of Wilbur Lansing, Philip often had occasion to remark, was his instantaneous, unquestioning response to the appeal of a friend in need. He flashed his partner a quick glance, saw the distress upon his face, and rose at once to his feet.

"Slip out through the garden door, and I'll meet you down the road in ten minutes with the car. If you want to beat it,—beat it; I'll fix things here with Beckie and the others. Leave it to your Uncle Dudley; don't give the matter another thought. I'll bring your suit-case up with me when I drive in, to-morrow."

A quarter of an hour later when they were speeding toward the station, Philip said:

"I can't marry Leila Vale. I guess you understand that's the reason I'm running away."

Wilbur drove on silently for some moments.

"I don't know but what you'd be a fool to marry her," he said reflectively. "I hate to see a man railroaded into marriage. . . Damn these women, anyway. They're always grafting on some good fellow. They picked you out to work off Leila on you. I don't blame you for bucking. Leila's a has-been. I don't know what you'd get out of marrying her."

Philip was taken aback.

"Oh, I like Leila well enough," he said quickly in her defe
"I guess that's the trouble. . . . But I *can't* marry her; I'm
—I'm not free."

Wilbur shot him a glance.

"You mean that English girl?"

Philip frowned and shook his head.

"No. I'll tell you all about it in a day or so. We'll g
together and have a talk. I'll want you to help me."

The last few minutes of the drive, they raced the train to t
station. As Philip clambered upon the rear platform and felt t
tumbling trucks beneath his feet as the train gathered momentu
he drew a great breath of relief. The sense of escape came to hi
with tremendous satisfaction.

§ 5.

He felt well repaid for what his abrupt departure cost him, wh
he reached the peaked-roofed cabin among the pepper and acac
trees. He thought to surprise Mrs. Grotenberg, and tiptoed to
window, cautiously peering in. Lamp-light streamed in a divergi
rhomboid of light from the open bedroom door. He could s
nothing more. He slipped around the corner of the house, ste
ping carefully upon the sod to avoid the crunch of his feet upo
the pebbled pathway. Through the further window he caught sig
of her. She lay in bed, her hands folded quietly, one acro
another, her head supported by an extra pillow, her body stretch
out straight, the feet together. The warm light from the lam
beside the bed touched her sallow face kindly; two thin silk
braids of iron-gray hair lay upon the pillow; her profile cut o
sharply by the strong light, was flung grotesquely in black image
upon the bare wall; the eyes were lost in deep wells of shado
the nose protruded, gaunt and prominent, the lean pouch of loo
skin hung like a limp bag beneath the chin.

Philip watched her for some moments, surprised to find her lyi
so,—so quiet, so unoccupied. For an instant the fear gripped hi
she was dead, but as he intently watched, his heart grown still, h
moving fingers reassured him. Fearing he might startle her, h
walked some distance away from the house before he hallooed. H

had brought some provisions from a delicatessen store at the station in Berkeley, and these he carried in a great paper bag beneath his arm. It was nearly eight o'clock and he was weary and hungry; the prospect of Mrs. Grotenberg getting supper ready for him while he lolled near by in a kitchen chair, chatting and smoking, had held for him the promise of contentment after his long trips on trains and boat.

She met him at the door, a wrapper flung over her night-gown.

"Philip!" His name rang with surprised delight. She threw her arms about his neck and dropped her head against his coat, choking with happy emotion. As he held her to him with his free arm, he was concerned to feel how thin she was. She had been a wide-hipped, robust woman when he first knew her; now she was slim, almost frail. He could feel her ribs beneath his finger-tips.

"Aw,—take a brace,—take a brace, Mrs. G.," he said patting her and pressing his lips affectionately to her thin hair. "Cut it out,—don't give way like this. Buck up, woman, or I'll spill some of this chowder all over you."

She kissed him hungrily, clinging to him, half-laughing, half-crying.

"Whatever brought you home?" she demanded, holding him from her, gazing with love and anxiety into his face. "Was the party a failure? Didn't you have a good time?"

"Sure, the party was all right. I just got to feeling I wanted to see you."

"You didn't?—You *didn't?*" Her tired face was transfigured.

"Fact! I got tired of their chatter and yelling, and thought it would be a lot nicer up here with you fussing over getting something to eat. See here: I brought a cold chicken; do you think it'll be any good?"

Mrs. Grotenberg put her hand to her heart and closed her eyes to steady herself against the exquisite emotion that flooded her. She wrestled for composure, then opened them brightly, looking up eagerly into his face, prepared to catch his mood, to enter gaily into any plan for the evening.

But she was still flustered, still too excited. She breathed rapidly, holding his big hand in one of hers, the fingers of the other pressed to her forehead in an effort to concentrate.

"Now, just a moment, Flip; let me think a second. I've got to get into something decent. You'll have to wait a minute till I change. I look such a hag! . . . Take off your things and put whatever you've got there on the kitchen table. Light the stove and put the kettle on,—fill it first, you know,—and I'll be with you just as fast as I can. . . . Flip,—you never did a sweeter, kinder thing in your life than to come home to-night to your old woman. You're the best man God ever made."

But later he found her in tears again. Supper was under way, and the clean pine top of the kitchen table was set with knives and forks, cups and saucers, napkins and tumblers. He had been busy carving the cold chicken, while she watched the toast browning in the gas oven. Presently he missed her. As he straightened up, he heard a half-smothered sob in the next room. He found her leaning against the high wooden mantel above the empty fireplace, her handkerchief tightly pressed against her mouth and nose.

"What the devil——" he began mildly. He was frankly puzzled.

He saw the violent physical effort she made, then, for self-control. Her back was toward him; the spine stiffened, the shoulders heaved, her body from the waist up achieved a small contortion. She turned to him, smiling through glistening tears, her lips tight shut, shaking her head as though freeing herself from the emotion that for the moment had overcome her. She came to him, and laid her head against his shoulder, until she was able to speak.

"You could never understand what makes me cry, Flip," she said at length in quivering tones. "I'm a strange woman. I've tasted all kinds of bitterness and hardship. I'm not used to happiness, I guess,—not happines like you have brought me. What have I ever done to deserve the devotion of a big fine feller like you? . . . I'm old,—I'm nothing but a husk,—no, don't interrupt me! . . . I can't hold you,—I know that. You're young,—you want what's young and fresh. I have no right to try and keep you for myself. I love you too much to stand in your way. You may not see it yourself, but I am older, Flip, and I know. Happiness

has come to me, too late; I cannot—may not live to enjoy it. It's been a long unhappy struggle for me. I shall be glad when it is over. . . . But now, I'm going to set you free. Coming back to me as you have to-night of your own accord has given me the courage I need. I know now I can give you up. I have fought out a great fight with myself. It seemed impossible to me that I could take this step voluntarily. Our parting is inevitable. Eventually you will go. But if I have the strength *to send you from me,* I shall at least find comfort in knowing it was my own act. There won't be any unpleasantness to remember; there won't be any humiliation."

Philip could not follow. As she continued to speak, the words poured from her in a torrent. He only grasped a little of what she said, and was amazed at her heat.

"Why, what's all this nonsense? What are you talking about?"

"I know better than *you* do what I'm talking about." A sudden calmness had come to her. She raised his big hand quickly to her lips and kissed it. "Get out of my way," she continued lightly, pushing him to one side, "my toast has burned to a crisp!"

Black smoke poured into the kitchen when she opened the oven and as new air rushed in, the curled, blackened pieces of bread burst into flame. She banged the door shut and turned out the gas.

"No toast for you, Mr. Baldwin," she announced in her accustomed gay tones, "except what's made. There's some bakery doughnuts in the bread box, and I can brown soda crackers on the burner."

They sat down to their supper ten minutes later, and Philip munched hungrily, ripping the meat from chicken bones with a wrench of his jaw, helping himself to great mouthfuls of salad, draining his beer in deep draughts. Nothing passed Mrs. Grotenberg's lips, and after a time he observed she was not eating. At once he demanded she should eat with him; he reproached her for not being companionable, and half-jokingly accused her of refusing to share the food because on this particular occasion *he* had provided it. He asserted it was "no fun to sit there and eat all alone." A slight flush mounted her dark cheek, and after a vain attempt to

check his urgent protest, she allowed him to persuade her. Then they were merry again, and presently were laughing in great felicity.

A feeling of bodily comfort and repletion came over Philip. He smacked his lips appreciatively, sucking his teeth. When he had drunk the last of his beer, he pushed back his chair from the table, and felt in his vest pocket for the cigar he had earlier denied himself.

"By jingo, Mrs. G., you certainly know how to dish up food! That was only delicatessen stuff, but somehow you make it taste awfully good."

"If you only had let me know you were coming, I'd have had something really nice for you. I hate delicatessen food; if you could have waited, I'd have made you something decent." But she was pleased, nevertheless; she never failed to respond to his praise.

"Can I help you clear away?"

It was part of the programme for him to make the offer, and for her to wax indignant.

"Well, I guess *not!* It's no work for a man,—a big feller like you! . . . You go on and smoke your cigar. I'll be finished in fifteen minutes. I'll only pile them."

Philip unbuttoned his vest, eased his belt, and strolled out on the porch where he ensconced himself with his back against one of the slim pillars, his feet crossed comfortably out before him. The night was still and warm. A faint breeze stirred, bringing the smell of wood smoke; the acacia trees in bud added a delicate scent to the fragrant wind. Strata of cloud strips blurred a sickly moon sinking toward the pine-covered heights behind the distant Presidio across the bay; the shifting waters flashed back an occasional bright reflection. Twinkling light marked Sausalito and Alcatraz, and a few brave gleams, like sparkling sequins on black velvet, showed where stood the burned and barren hills of San Francisco. Frogs croaked in the wet grass, and along the end of the porch roof the Japanese bells tinkled musically.

Philip drew deeply on his cigar. Visions of Leila came to him out of the darkness, the intonations of her voice and laugh sounded in his ears. He saw her smiling at him provokingly, her

dark somnolent eyes mocking him through narrowed lids; he saw the sweep of her splendid straw-colored hair, the curve of her warm cheek covered with fine down, her red mouth and trembling lips, inviting his kiss. She was fascinating; she was alluring; there was no denying the fact. It would be some man's great privilege to tame her, subjugate her, make her really know what love was. She was flirting with him, of course; she was after him for his money. Yet deep down inside him, Philip was sure there was something more than just material things that made him attractive to her. He had recognized in her eyes when they had met gaze with gaze a warmth that the most consummate actress could not simulate. She had trembled in his arms, and when he had held her close to him, she had thrilled with an emotion that had been no mere pretense. There was a real bond of sympathy between them, a mutual interest that drew them together, a chord in her that answered to a chord in him. He knew he could make her love him deeply, truly, passionately, and the thought made him draw a sharp, quick breath that was almost pain.

He heard the door of the ice-box slam, and the splash of water from a tap in the kitchen sink. He sighed, flung away his cigar, and rose slowly to his feet. It was pleasant to think about though nothing could come of it. He could not desert Mrs. Grotenberg; he was too necessary to her; she could never get along without him. Leila was a fascinating creature, but she must save her blandishments for someone on whom they would not be wasted. He was not free; he was tied. Leila must go her way and he his. He was obligated to Mrs. Grotenberg; it would be impossible for him to hurt or wrong her.

Considering how best to break off definitely his affair with Leila, it occurred to him to go away, and take Mrs. Grotenberg with him. Things had quieted down at the office; no sales were being made; he would suggest to Wilbur that he needed a trip. He and Mrs. Grotenberg would go on to New York. Wilbur had been east two years ago; now, it should be his turn. He decided to take his partner completely into his confidence; he knew Wilbur well enough to feel sure he would agree to whatever he proposed. The quicker he got away, the easier it would be for himself, for

Leila and Lucy. He turned back into the cabin, eager to impart hi news to Mrs. Grotenberg.

But she was not in the kitchen. He found her in bed, he position almost identical with that in which she had been whe he arrived. She answered the concern on his face with a brigh smile.

"Don't be cross, Flip," she pleaded, holding out her hand to hi affectionately. "You *would* make me eat, and I've told you shouldn't, when my stomach is upset. It's nothing; just a little pain kind of a gripe here in my side. I had Doctor Lloyd in whil you were away,—I had him just to please you, my dear,—and h said it was *nothing,* just indigestion that a little careful eating wil set straight."

"I was a big fool to've urged you," Philip said penitently "You can starve before I suggest it again!"

He sat down on the side of the bed and took her rough smal hand.

"Say, Mrs. G.," he commenced awkwardly, "how would you lik to take a trip with me? A real, honest-to-God trip? . . . A trip to little old N. Y. C.?"

Her eyes searched his face, puzzled and inquiring.

"Oh, I mean it. I got to go east,—to New York, for a—on a business proposition, and I thought I'd like to take you with me . . . Would you like to go,—hey?"

"Oh, Flip!"

"Well—now, how soon could you get ready? I'd want to clea out just as soon as possible,—maybe by the end of this week!"

"Flip! Flip!" She struggled to sit up, but her emotion wa too much for her; she sank back dragging his hand with her, clasping it to her flat breast.

"I could be ready to-morrow morning!" she whispered, blinking back tears.

"Well, I'll get our tickets, and make our reservations righ away," he declared, frowning with thought. "I'll have to do som hustling."

Mechanically he began to undress. They discussed with eagerness the details of their departure. Would Philip order a trunk at th

Emporium to-morrow and have it sent over? There weren't many things Mrs. Grotenberg needed. It would be wiser to wait and do her shopping in New York, but immediate necessities could be purchased in Oakland. She would take the trolley into Oakland in the morning.

Occasional twinges of pain seized her. She refused to heed them at first, but presently they grew worse. She had finally to ask Philip to bring her a pill-box from her bag that hung on the arm supporting the bureau mirror. Philip as he removed the tight pasteboard lid, noticed it was marked *Morphia*.

"Does it get so bad you have to take much of this stuff?" he inquired with concern.

"Oh-h, sometimes. I don't like to take it, Flip, but Doctor Lloyd said it had a real medicinal effect on my indigestion as well as quieting the pain. . . . Put the gas out in the kitchen before you come to bed."

He did as she told him and then flung the front door wide, folding back the curtains from the open windows to let in as much air as possible. He stepped out on the porch in his bare feet, and inhaled the fragrance of the cool night in deep breaths, before he extinguished the light and got into bed. Mrs. Grotenberg nestled close to him, her head resting on his broad shoulder, his arm about her. They often went to sleep so. To-night for a little while, they murmured of their plans. Drowsiness came to Philip swiftly; the light breeze fanned his face pleasantly; the odor of Mrs. Grotenberg's silky hair filled his nostrils.

§ 6.

When he arrived at his office the following morning, he found upon his desk a note from Lucy which Wilbur had evidently brought in with him from Burlingame.

"Dear Philip," she wrote, "I hope your toothache is better and that you were able to get hold of your dentist yesterday. We were all sorry to have you go;—the party was quite demoralized after your departure, and last night we all went to bed early. Leila came into my room while I was undressing, and we had a long confidential talk. I wish you could have heard part of it. She

really cares for you, Phil; I knew she did, of course, but I was surprised to find out *how much.* Marrying you would mean a lot to her,—we all know that; she has had an awfully hard time and it's always been a struggle for her. But, now, I truly believe she'd marry you if you hadn't a *cent!* She's beautiful, clever, admired and I know both your natures *inside out,* and I am *sure* that the two of you are absolutely suited to each other in every way. Every one who loves you or is your friend, Philip, is eager for this match. Leila thinks you don't care, but I tell her that any man who has been as attentive as you have been for the last six months must either be in *love* or *insane.* I hope you won't delay your declaration a day longer. We're motoring up this morning with Gerald and Flossie Prentiss, and Leila will be home early in the afternoon. Ring her up, Phil, and go to see her, and set her heart at rest. I *must* be the first one to know! You must promise me that *faithfully.* I've got a gorgeous dinner all planned when you're ready to announce it!

"Ever affectionately your sister,

"Lucy."

Philip crammed the note into his pocket, and stalked to the window where he stood gazing, unseeing, out upon the remnants of the burned foundations in an adjoining lot. He was in a mess, and he foresaw the row Lucy was sure to make as soon as she learned he was going away. She was a determined little person, and would bitterly attack him, refusing to be friends. It meant a break between them for a time; she would even try to enlist her husband's sympathies. Philip had grown accustomed to her group; had come to enjoy them; he liked their inconsequential chatter, now, their gaiety and light-heartedness, the bridge-playing, the feasting and drinking. Lucy was sure to exclude him from this charmed circle; she would try to set them all against him. Collectively they might even influence Wilbur.

He turned from the window with an oath.

"I'll be damned if I give her up," he said fiercely between his teeth. He was eager for his talk with his partner.

He found Wilbur studying a map and an abstract. He was alone except for his stenographer whom at a sign from Philip Wilbur asked to leave the room.

"Tell the operator not to ring any calls," Philip began. "I've got a lot of things I want to talk over with you and I can't wait."

When he was sure they would not be disturbed, he unburdended
mself. He had never discussed Mary Rowland with Wilbur, but
e did so now in order that his brother-in-law might fully under-
and the part Mrs. Grotenberg had played for him. Mary seemed
fill a chapter in his life which in some curious way had no relation
ith what preceded or followed. She had given him a glimpse of
eaven and had passed on, and the current of his existence had
united and swept forward as if the beauty, the culture and the love
e had shown him had never split the narrow flood or divided its
aters. Mrs. Grotenberg had wanted to comfort him, and like a
tle boy, he had gone to her.

"You see how it is, Wilbur," he explained painfully. "There's
ly two women in the world that *really* care about me,—I mean
ally *love* me,—and they're my mother and Mrs. Grotenberg. I
uldn't quit Mrs. G. now for any consideration; it wouldn't be
ght; she needs me, depends on me . . ."

Wilbur cleared his throat.

"I vaguely remember your friend. She was at your wedding,
asn't she?"

Philip nodded.

"She's older than you? Must be past forty."

"I think she's just about forty."

"She didn't have much in the way of looks, as I recall her."

"No, I don't think anyone would ever call Mrs. G. handsome.
wasn't drawn to her because she was beautiful. I think you'd
y she was rather homely now; she's very much thinner than she
ed to be, and she's been sick a good deal."

"How long you been keeping her?"

Philip winced at the phrase.

"We-ll,—what do you want me to call it?" Wilbur challenged.
"I suppose I *am* 'keeping' her."

"You've been *living* with her, haven't you?" the other pursued
rtly. "You've been paying her bills? Is she under the im-
ession she's married to you, or that you may marry her some
y?"

Philip looked up angrily.

"No,—she understands the relationship thoroughly," he said
arply. "There's never been any talk of marriage; marriage

would have spoiled our comradeship; she wouldn't have marr me if I had *begged* her. . . . You're quite right: she's my m tress, and I'm keeping her,—and it's a terrible thing in the eye a lot of damned conventional opinionated fools!"

"Oh-o, don't get sore."

"I don't want to, but there's nothing ugly or rotten in relationship with Mrs. Grotenberg. She's a fine big-hearted wom and I'm devoted to her."

Wilbur raised his hands in a placating fashion, and there w silence between the two for an interval.

"Damn it all, Wilbur," Philip said presently. "I came to y for help,—not to be criticized or have my conduct questioned

A change swept into Wilbur's eyes, and he brought his swi chair down to the floor with a bang.

"You're quite right, Phil. I guess I slipped my trolley. A help you want from me, you know you can count on. . . . Wha up?"

"Well,—I want to get out of this mess with Leila Vale."

Wilbur pursed his lips, and the frown returned.

"I see," he said slowly; "you want to stick to your la friend."

"Exactly. I'm bound to her; I can't throw her over."

"How do you mean you're 'bound' to her?"

"I mean what I say."

"You said you weren't *married* to her? And you've ma no promises?"

"No."

"Have you agreed to take care of her for any definite time?"

"No."

"Well,—how do you consider yourself 'bound'? . . . Give h a couple of thousand and tell her to go about her business."

Philip shut his jaw. Even Wilbur could not understand!

"She's not that type of 'kept-woman,'" he said evenly. "I bound to her by ties of affection—and—and loyalty."

"Oh-o,—you're still in love with her?"

"I can't say I was ever 'in love' with her."

"Well,—you like her better than you do Leila Vale?"

Philip flushed, and he hesitated a moment before he replied

"I can't say that,—either," he said in a low tone.

"Well,—what the devil——" Words failed Wilbur; he was completely mystified. He stared at Philip, frowning, his eyes fixed on his face, his mouth open.

"I'll try to explain to you carefully just what *is* my position," Philip said at length with excessive deliberateness. "I am obligated to a woman who is not my wife but who is my friend; I have encountered another woman who I'll freely confess has fascinated me and whom I have found very charming. I like this woman very much; for the sake of my argument let us say I like her a great deal better than the woman who is my friend. We will concede that I am in love with her, would like to marry her, and take her to live with me. Is that any reason why I should desert the woman who is my friend, who loves me as a wife, who is dutiful and good, who has in no ways offended me? Am I justified in abandoning the home I have made with her, merely because I now desire to make a new home with another woman I like better? If Mrs. Grotenberg was legally my wife, you would counsel me to get a divorce, and it is possible that resenting the artificial bond that held us together, I might do as you advise. But Mrs. Grotenberg has no claim on me, no right to hold me, make me live with her or provide for her,—and for that *very reason* I find it a pleasure to do both those things. If there is such a thing as true marriage as differentiated from a miserable pretense of marriage, then I consider my relationship with Mrs. Grotenberg in the former sense, and my relationship with my late wife in the latter. . . . I don't give a damn what you or Lucy or the law or church or *anybody* says, I know deep down inside me, I'd be a contemptible hound,—a scoundrel,—a damned whelp if I quit Mrs. Grotenberg for Leila Vale!"

Emotion shook Philip. He rose to his feet, and began to stride about the small office, driving a shut fist into an open palm, sucking his breath in sharply through clenched teeth. Wilbur, stirred by his partner's argument and his unusual feeling, watched him intently, until he flung himself once more into a chair. Then Wilbur got up, went to stand beside him, and placed his hand quietly and affectionately upon his shoulder.

"By God! You're *all right,* Philip,—you're all right," he said warmly. "You're white,—and I'll stand back of you and see you through till hell freezes over."

Philip nodded and neither spoke for some moments.

"Now let's see," Wilbur began in a fresh tone, "what do you propose to do?"

"I thought it would be better for me to clear out."

"Yes, that's just the ticket."

"I thought I'd like to take a run east,—to New York, say, and take Mrs. G with me."

"Sure,—that's fine. You want to get right out."

"Just as soon as we can manage it. I've got some business matters to wind up. I hoped we might get away by the end of the week. . . . And I'll leave you to face the music."

"Oh, leave the music to me,—I'll face it with pleasure. I'll tell 'em you had to go east,—you lost a lot of money, that will jar 'em!—and that you won't be back for a coon's age. I'll tell Lucy the *real* dope by-and-by, and talk her over, and get her to slip Leila the change for a trip to Japan. You'll stand for that, I guess. She'll fall for it, and when she's gone, I'll wire you to come home, and everybody will have forgotten all about the scheme. . . . You leave the music to your Uncle Dudley. I know how to play a tune they'll dance to,—you bet your bottom dollar!"

Philip grasped Wilbur's hand in a strong grip of friendship.

"You're a brick," he said feelingly.

"In the meantime," Wilbur continued, returning the pressure, "I'll tell 'em you're flying down to Los Angeles for a couple of days and you're terribly busy; that'll keep 'em from bothering you."

§ 7.

The intervening days were full of pleasurable excitement. A sense of deep satisfaction descended upon Philip. He enjoyed the conviction his decision had been both wise and honorable, and he was doing the right thing. Once he had renounced mentally the possibility of an alliance with Leila, he breathed easier. He realized he had been afraid of her, afraid he could never have lived

up to what she would have expected of him. Mrs. Grotenberg made no demands upon him; his pleasure, his comfort, his wishes were always hers.

He had never travelled. The motor trip in the southern part of the state on which Mrs. Grotenberg had accompanied him, was the furthest he had ever been from home. A Pullman vestibule sleeper promised a new and delightful experience. Buying the railroad tickets and compartment space was a thrilling business; he had the clerk in the ticket office trace in black pencil across the map in the center of the time-table the route he and Mrs. Grotenberg would take to Chicago. He purchased a wardrobe trunk for himself and one for Mrs. Grotenberg, and had them delivered to the little cabin in Berkeley; their shiny black surfaces and bright brass fittings fascinated him; he liked to touch them, open and close them, and play with their patented contraptions and ingenious conveniences. He was enthusiastic over the rough grey Scotch coat Mrs. Grotenberg selected for herself upon her excursion into Oakland, and over the grey tweed hat with the brown feather and black jet buckle, which went so well with it. He matched her investment with a grey woolly overcoat and a grey cap for himself, and brought her home as a surprise a morocco leather suit-case handsomely fitted with a complete set of toilet articles backed with silver. He was full of happiness.

They were to leave on Friday night. Lucy telephoned him, she must see him. Wilbur had told her he was going to Los Angeles for a day or two, and she insisted she had something important about which she wished to consult him before he departed. He agreed to run out to see her, but had no intention of doing so. After he and Mrs. Grotenberg were safely aboard the Overland, Wilbur could tell Lucy the truth, and she would understand then why he had not come. He would not allow his mind to dwell on Leila; when thoughts of her assailed him, he tried to think of something else.

The night before their departure, he was late in getting home. His stenographer,—whom Wilber spoke of always as a 'secretary,'—stayed down at the office with him until nearly eleven o'clock, working over insurance papers, answering a few letters, and taking dictation of a number of long memorandums to Wilbur which

were to guide Philip's partner in dealing with certain insurance matters that would come up in his absence.

Philip caught the eleven o'clock boat across the bay. He was pleased to meet Jimmy Spears on board and together they made the trip to Berkeley. Jimmy was married and had two small babies. He had left the *Market Street Bank* for a better job with a construction company, and was full of enthusiasm about the speed with which San Francisco was being rebuilt.

"Just think what they've done in less than a year!" he cried.

"That's so," Philip agreed, impressed with Jimmy's glib statistics.

They spoke of Stanley Trevor.

"He's a cold-blooded kind of a cuss," Jimmy remarked. "Hope I'm not saying something that'll hurt your feelings? . . . Well,—he plugs away awfully hard, works like blazes. They think a lot of him in the bank; he's old man Paris' right-hand man now. I heard they're going to make him cashier."

Spears was anxious to have Philip dine with his wife and himself some night.

"We haven't got much of an establishment," he said bashfully, "and Mabel hasn't anyone to help her, but she can get up a pretty fair meal; she really can. . . . I'd like awfully if you'd come; I'd like you to see Bub and Snookey."

Philip explained that business matters were taking him east on the morrow, but he promised Jimmy he would let him know as soon as he got back. They shook hands cordially when they parted.

As he climbed up to the cabin, he found himself wondering what a couple of small children would mean to Mrs. Grotenberg and himself. The idea was not unpleasant; he was surprised how attractive it seemed. There might be a swing in one of the peppers and there would be childish voices about the little cabin all day, small wants to satisfy, small hurts to comfort, small hearts to gladden. Both he and Mrs. Grotenberg were qualified to love and take the right care of a couple of children. Hers was a starved life, he thought,—a life that had been denied much; she had had neither husband nor children, and she was entitled to both. . . . Paul! . . . He wondered if Constance would consent

to send him back to him. Whenever he thought of his son, he invariably felt guilty and uncomfortable. He had neglected the boy, ignored him, allowed him to grow up hardly knowing his father by sight. The check each month did not discharge his obligations; he had always criticized Marjorie for abandoning the boy. He would point all these things out to Constance when he got back; he would have a long talk with her. Paul would be a big comfort to Mrs. Grotenberg, and he wanted to know the boy better himself, to do something really fine for him. When they returned from New York, it might be a good idea to introduce Mrs. Grotenberg as his wife, to establish her in a home in San Francisco, and have Paul come to live with them; the boy need not know they were not married.

A good long talk with Mrs. Grotenberg would help a great deal in clearing up the matter in his own mind.

He strode up the pebble pathway, cleared the shallow porch steps with a single bound and burst open the front door. The trunks were nearly packed, the little room was topsy-turvy, the gas sang from the jointed arm bracket that protruded from the wall. The kerosene lamp with its shade of orange silk, which usually lit up the room, was packed in excelsior in one of the barrels to go into storage.

Philip shouted. He opened the bedroom door and stood still upon the threshold. Mrs. Grotenberg was in bed, her hands folded quietly across one another, her head supported by an extra pillow, her body stretched out straight, the feet together. At once he knew she was dead. The conviction came to him with terrific suddenness. He tiptoed nearer and bent over, guardedly, examining her face. He touched her hands with hesitating fingers. They were clammy cold. Some dreadful new thing, some horrible, terrifying third presence obtruded itself. This woman with whom he had slept last night, whom he knew so intimately, whose body had been next to his, whose lips he had pressed, the smell of whose hair was familiar incense to him, she who had cooked, washed and worked for him, who had loved him with passion, was—no more. She was dead,—she was gone. . . . She was *dead.*

A force, a spectre, something supernatural, terrible, intervened; Philip felt an unseen hand against his chest. He stared at the

dead woman with straining eyeballs, his world, his life, the order of his existence cracking about his ears. The sunken face was superbly calm, a cold rigidity and dignity invested the dead features, an eternal repose had descended upon the tired body On the bed-clothes near the folded hands lay the cover of a pill-box Philip recognized. He tiptoed toward the door, hesitated at the threshold, and came back to turn out the ugly flaring gas-jet, singing from its globeless bracket. Then he crept stealthily from the room, and gently, with infinite care, shut the door noiselessly behind him.

He found the letter she had written him in a little cleared space upon the table. Painfully he plodded through it, winking back the tears that blurred and blurred his vision. It was a great outpouring of her love for him, tragic, heart-rending, pathetic. Her love had known no selfishness, and self-destruction was the great proof of it. She could live but a few months at best, a year at the utmost,—she told him; a fatal cancerous growth spelled death for her; Doctor Lloyd had told her an operation was impossible. It was merely a question of time. For some weeks she had been contemplating this final step, and on Sunday when Philip had come home unexpectedly from Burlingame, and she had been convinced of his love for her, she had suddenly found courage to determine upon the way out. Better to end their days together in the sunshine of perfection, than to wait until she was made helpless by suffering he would be unable to alleviate. And then when he had suggested the trip to New York, she had weakened. It had seemed too wonderful; she had thought that they could go together for a time at least; she had felt her strength ebbing, but hoped she could still make him believe it was only indigestion. She blamed herself for ever deviating from the decision reached on Sunday, but to go east with him, see New York, the theatres and Broadway, had tempted her, and she had weakly permitted herself to dream a little dream of it for three days, and then—when she was folding Philip's coat to hang it in the wardrobe trunk,—the coat he had worn on Monday,—she had discovered Lucy's letter, and the stern and, this time, unwavering realization had come to her, that her earlier decision was the wiser course. She had been permitted to have him longer than she had ever

hoped. The two years in which they had lived together had compensated her for all the preceding bitter ones. She was content to call it "quits," and to sever the bonds, herself, by which she held him.

"I do not know what awaits me, my dearest one, but I have no fear. I am glad to escape the physical suffering that has been so constant these last few months, and which I have tried to keep from you. I understand now, why you proposed the trip to New York, and that 'business reasons' had very little to do with it. It was wonderful of you, Flip, but I am glad I discovered your real reasons. I cannot let you make the sacrifice on my account. Stay and marry Miss Vale, Flip dear; your sister admires her and thinks she's suited to you and will make you happy as you deserve. Do not let the thought of old 'Mrs. G.' stand in your way. I want you to marry her, my dear; forget that I was ever jealous. You are entitled to a good wife,—a far better one than I could have made you. Oh, Flip—Flip! If love could have only made of me all I wanted to be to you! You are the finest man I ever knew. I am glad if I have made you happier even in the smallest way, and I could not want a better death than one which contributes to your peace of mind. I hear your angry protest at that! Flip dear, I understand,—I understand *everything*. You are good and you love me, but your love is not the love of a lover,—has never been. You have proved how strong and fine your affection for me is, how noble and loyal you can be, by refusing to take this clever and beautiful girl who is deeply in love with you, as your wife. Thank you, my friend. It is magnificent self-denial, but I cannot accept the sacrifice. My love for you knows no selfish gratification,—no self-interest. I want only your happiness. My death sets you free,—so, good-bye. My lips to yours, my eyes to your eyes, our hands tight clasped. Good-bye,—it is hard to say it, isn't it? I stop here to sit and think. Good-bye is terrible. I am tempted to postpone it one more night to hold your dear head in my arms just once again, and hear your steady breathing that I love so well, as you lie asleep beside me. There is no good of it! A last good-bye. You have made one woman's life a paradise; you have given me all I've ever known of earthly joy. I have not lived in vain. My dying gratitude, my prayers, my eternal love are yours."

END OF BOOK II

BRASS

Annul a marriage? 'Tis impossible!
Though ring about your neck be brass not gold,
Needs must it clasp, gangrene you all the same!

—*Robert Browning.*

BOOK III

BRASS

BOOK III

CHAPTER

§ 1.

THE day had been hot, the first of the summer heat. Rosemary ased the closing of the screen door behind her, gave a final anxious lance through the wire mesh into the darkened interior of the oom, listened to catch the even breathing of the sick child, and ptoed to the other end of the porch, shaded by thick masses of ink roses that hung in tangled profusion through the trellised oof. She sank with a tired sigh into the sagging seat of a weather-eaten rocker. It was the first opportunity during the long, hot day he had had to rest. She closed her eyes, leaned her head against ie chair-back, her hands palms up in her lap, and gave herself p to the full enjoyment of the tranquil moment.

The heat of the June day was rapidly diminishing. Purple adows, like soft smoke, had begun to steal from between the clefts the hills, and presently would cover the whole western side Pleasant Valley. A faint breeze had begun to move, and it rought to the tired woman on the porch the fragrance of white oppies and mignonette. It reminded her that the garden must be atered that evening.

The waning afternoon was thick with small noises. The irrigat-g pump maintained a dull, methodic thump; Joe Requa, Harry's reman, was hammering iron down at the forge; a saw was ing sharpened; chickens clucked sleepily, and bees lazily circled out the roses that climbed the porch pillars. From the direction of e barn drifted the eager bark of Mutt, and Sammy's tireless outs as he drove Lady Beatrice in from pasture.

The crunch of approaching steps stirred the woman on the

porch back to life. She saw with relief it was only Mrs. Requa co for the baby.

"He's still asleep," Rosemary said guardedly, pulling hers up. "I haven't heard a peep out of him."

"Well, that's good now; the heat's been bothersome, and it's blessing he can sleep. How's the boy?" The foreman's wi jerked her head over her shoulder in the direction of the si room.

"Much better,—thank Heaven. The doctor's sure it must ha been something he ate that poisoned him. His fever's way down."

"Well,—glory be to God!—ain't that a relief to you, now, Mr Baldwin? I told Joe I never thought it was no regular sickness."

A muffled wail arrested them.

"*That's* the baby," declared Mrs. Requa.

At once the two women made their way into the house, steppi carefully across the creaking porch boards. An outburst of weepi greeted them as they opened the nursery door. The baby wi wide-flung arms and legs, and the full capacity of his lungs, w giving vent to his protest against neglect.

"Why, Philip Baldwin, you bad baby, you." His mother gather him into her arms, stilling his grief. "Whatever should make y cry like that, I want to know? . . . He's sopping wet," s commented to Mrs. Requa, holding out her hand, "give me that d didie."

Deftly she changed him, holding the safety-pin between h teeth, while she snugly drew the folds of the fresh diaper abo his small person. Little Philip, gazing up through teary eye recognized his mother and gurgled appreciatively.

"You rogue! You rascal," Rosemary said, dexterously catchi him across her lap to pull a clean dress over his head. "H the slyest and cutest of all of them."

"And the prettiest, too, I'm thinking," the woman commented.

"Ah, you should have seen Hal when he was this one's age. The never was a lovelier baby. . . . Sammy was good looking, too she added loyally.

"They're three fine ones," Mrs. Requa admitted. "But I dunn this one here's got a mighty takin' way with him."

She took the baby from his mother's lap and swung him to h

rge bosom, but little Philip preferred the maternal arms. His nall lip quivered and a frown gathered preparatory to a stormy ail. Rosemary shook her finger at him.

"Don't you dare!" she scolded mildly. "Not a peep out of ou! Don't you know your brother's sick, and you might wake im? . . . Take him out the back way, will you, Mrs. Requa?"

The woman disappeared with her burden, and Rosemary sought gain the rocker in the shady corner of the porch, after a reassur- g glance into the sick room as she passed the door.

The day was dying pleasantly, and a sense of peace and satis- ction descended upon her. Not all she had planned to do before ghtfall had been successfully accomplished, for the sick child with s small demands had repeatedly delayed her, but this she had reseen when she rose at six o'clock that morning, and mapped ut her day. Her program had not been interrupted as much as e feared. Now the feeling of work accomplished, of uninteresting sks performed and put behind her, brought a pleasing contentment. ne baby's laundry was out of the way, she had cleaned the sitting- om, had done some mending, and started her bread, while a ocolate custard,—one of Harry's favorite desserts,—was hard and ld, waiting supper in the netted meat safe on the back porch; e had not neglected to telephone her mother-in-law to inquire out the Judge, and had found time to write the Reverend Clement ould, rector of Epiphany Church, promising him a contribution of edlework for the bazaar. With it all she had succeeded in keeping e sick boy amused, and the day had been by far the best he had d since the night, a week before, when he had complained his ad ached while she was giving him his bath, and he had felt y and hot when she had gone to his bedside an hour later, to tisfy herself that he and his brother, Sam, were safely asleep.

Whatever had been the matter, it was over now, thought Rosemary th thankfulness. Something Hal had eaten had poisoned him, d on his calls Wednesday and Thursday morning and afternoon, l Dr. Garrett had pointedly avoided meeting her anxious eye. e had had no sleep on either of those nights, and it was not til to-day that the boy had seemed safely past the threatening nger.

Rosemary drew a long breath and shut her hands convulsively.

The boys had had more than their share of children's sickness They had had measles, whooping-cough, and mumps, and there ha been a dreadful time when the spectre of diphtheria stalked throug the house. Sammy had broken his collar-bone and split open h head, Hal had nearly severed his thumb, and had run a nail into h foot that resulted in blood poisoning; even the baby, who was n a year old yet, had burnt himself severely on the hot oven door the kitchen stove. They were always getting into trouble, though their mother, but somehow they always wriggled out of it. Ever accident, every illness made them more precious to her, more pa sionately beloved. The thought of losing one of them would som times come to her in the night, gripping her in cold terror. Ofte as many as a dozen times during the dark hours, she would sli from her own bed and steal to theirs, pulling the small cove over their shoulders, pushing their long hair out of their eye flattening the pillows beneath their heads that they might breat with more freedom. Frequently she knelt beside their cots and, i the darkness, prayed fervently for their welfare, her impassione plea bringing a gust of tears.

"O God, make them good, make them brave, and keep the pure. Don't let them become smirched. Shield them and prote them, and keep them free from sickness and accidents. . . . God, make me worthy of them, make me wise, make me just, mak me tolerant. Guide and direct me. O God, make me a goo mother to them. O God, give me strength and wisdom and courag to be a good mother to them,—my babies,—my darlings,—m boys!"

§ 2.

Harry came striding heavily up the road, his boots making crushing sound on the small broken rock underfoot. A ne tractor, ordered six months ago, had arrived the day before fro San Francisco, and Rosemary knew he had been since morning po tering over it, trying to persuade it to run. His cotton shirt hun wetly to his back and shoulders, his faded blue overalls wer shiny and streaked with grease. Catching sight of her, he cam across the dusty garden, and leaned his hard bronzed elbows o the porch floor, standing in the midst of the rose-bed below, pushin

ck his wide-brimmed hat, and wiping the fair hair from his damp rehead.

His first words were about his son, and he nodded with satisfac-n at Rosemary's reassuring report.

"How's the tractor?" she asked. "Is it what you expected?"

"It's going to do splendidly,—just what we've been needing. I sh to the Lord we had had it last spring, but that can't be helped w. One of the parts is missing, or at least neither Joe nor I n find it. I came in to 'phone a telegram 'bout it down to Frisco."

Rosemary frowned sympathetically. "After all the trouble u've had."

"Oh, it doesn't make such an awful difference just now. I n't want to start cultivating until next week, anyway. I'm going irrigate again to-morrow."

His wife looked surprised.

"What about water? I thought you said you were going to ve what we had until the peaches were in."

"I know—I know," Harry nodded in quick, characteristic fashion. ut I'm not taking any chances with this crop. I went over to old man Mackinnon to-day, and he's got lots of water, and 're going to rig up a gate with a meter, and dig a sluice across wn by the pasture field that will empty right into the irrigating nch. Mac says he'll charge me ten cents a hundred gallons. It's eap enough."

Rosemary considered thoughtfully, but made no comment. She d perfect faith in her husband's judgment regarding such mat-s. Presently she dropped her head once more against the tall ck of the rocker.

"Tired, old girl?"

"Comfortably so. It's been a full day, but I feel so relieved out Hal."

"Yes, he's out of the woods now. . . . I hope you'll sleep to-night. u won't consider my taking the couch?"

Rosemary smiled and shook her head.

"You need your sleep more than I do, Harry, and you know 'd never wake up if he called."

"I suppose you'd worry if I sat up with him. But you know like to help you if I could."

"You don't have to tell me that after nearly ten years," Rosema said with an affectionate glance.

"Good times are coming, old girl. This year's going to be banner crop. I guess the prunes will run eight ton to the acre, a the 'cots ought to net a couple of thousand. We won't owe anybo a nickel by Christmas, and next year we ought to start a savir account. Think of the bank owing us money! I was figuring out last night, and the future looks mighty bright. Making d allowances for everything,—blights, frosts and droughts,—the tre are bound to bring us in a good income, and we ought to put aw a thousand or so every year. The smartest move you and I ev made was when we borrowed the money to buy the Hooker pla When those trees begin to bear, that's going to be all clear profit, a it's my idea to put that money aside and keep it for the bo education."

"You're a wonder, Harry! You're always planning ahead, a I think it is just that that's made everything come out right."

"You've planned with me."

"Oh, yes, I know, but the responsibility has been yours."

"I'd never got anywhere if it hadn't been for you."

Rosemary smiled, disclaiming his praise with a little sha of her head.

"No man ever worked harder than you; nobody ever had such uphill fight with such awful setbacks, one after another.

"Well, well, it's all been for you and the boys. You've slav and grown thin and never complained, and I just had to go on a do the best I could. Anyhow there's nothing I've done here on t ranch that wasn't as much your thought as mine. When you p suaded me to cash in the life insurance policy for eight hundr dollars, that was the turning point, and it was your idea and yo courage that did it."

Rosemary laughed outright, and her gaiety drove the look of se ousness from her husband's face.

"Guess we're a mutual admiration society!"

"Well, you and I know," continued Harry, serious once mo "what we've had to sacrifice and give up and do without, and h we've worked and plugged along to make this old place a succe I've told myself a thousand times, if hard work, honest living a

raight dealing amounted to anything, we were bound to make ood. I guess neither of us could've done it alone, and I guess e've got a right to throw a few cut flowers at ourselves."

His wife gazed reflectively at her hands, and her vision blurred n instant.

"It's been hard,—a long struggle, and I'm glad there's some fight ill ahead. I wouldn't want it just plain sailing from now on, ould you, Harry?"

"Oh, no,—but there's nothing the future can hold for us that n scare us again. We've been scared as badly already as it's ossible."

"I don't know; I dread ill health,—not death, you know, but one of the boys was injured and had to suffer for years,—like our father."

Harry nodded slowly, and for a moment both were silent.

"He'll be soon out of it. Did you find time to 'phone Ma?"

"Yes. He's just the same. Your mother doesn't think he suffers uch. . . . How long's he been this way?"

Her husband frowned thoughtfully.

"Before Phil and Marjorie were married. I remember he couldn't down to the city for the wedding."

"That's twelve years ago!" Rosemary said in a shocked voice. What a terrible trial!"

"Well, you know he hasn't been laid up *all* that time. He was fine shape when Lucy was married, and when Hal was born walked all the way out here."

"But he hasn't stirred out of bed for . . . why, it's fully two ars!"

"I wonder what Ma will do without him. They've been married, guess, nearly thirty-five years! Philip's thirty-four."

"Don't worry about your mother, Harry, my dear. She's a oman that will always find enough to interest her, take my word r it."

"I wish she would consider coming to us."

"Well, she may. She's a most unusual woman, a mighty wise e, and if she thinks she can be of service, she'll come. She'd be a odsend to us, Harry, you know she would."

Rosemary rose to her feet and thrust back into place the thick

coils of her crinkly chestnut hair that had slipped to one side, feelir for concealed hairpins with deft fingers.

"I must go get supper started." She still lingered, however, ar leaned her head against one of the pillars supporting the por roof, to look across the rolling tree-tops that swept down from t house to the distant road.

"I got to 'phone, too," Harry remarked. But they both delay to move, unwilling to end the chance talk that had stirred the Each was conscious of the other's dearness.

"Moth-ther!"

The sick-room summons instantly roused the woman.

"Yes, my darling, I'm coming."

She turned away quickly, at once intent upon her invalid needs, eager to resume her vigilance.

The room was in semi-darkness, for the shades had been car fully drawn before she had quitted it. The little face, warm fro sleep, seemed lost in the wide expanse of the big double bed, t brown eyes startlingly large.

"C'n I have a drink, Mom?"

Rosemary bent over her son, pushing back the thick hair fro his forehead, running her hand along the creases of his nec clasping a small hand.

"You old muggins, you," she said tenderly, a happy catch in h voice. "You're in a fine little perspiration, and that's good-bye Mr. Fever."

She sat down upon the edge of the bed, and felt, through t opening of his night-shirt, the thin ribby chest and small arm-pit Her lips parted in a satisfied smile, and her eyes glistened.

"You're a duck,—do you know that, Hal Baldwin?—a down *duck*, and you're mother's darling!"

She kissed him warmly, pressing his moist soft neck again her lips and cheek.

"Have I been a good boy?" he asked, puzzled by his mother emotion, anxious for any chance commendation.

"You're an angel, and you're going to be all well soon, a go play 'hunt-the-lion-to-his-lair' with Sam and Patsy Requ . . . Hal," she said in a changed voice, anxiously studying h face, "you *will* be careful about what you eat when you're w

again? Nothing between meals,—not *one blessed* thing without mother's permission. I don't care *what* the other boys eat. You're different, and you cannot . . ."

The admonition continued earnestly for some minutes, and then Rosemary kissed the smooth warm cheek once more, straightened the rumpled sheet, adjusted shades, brought a drink and his well-beloved stuffed bear, before she disappeared kitchenward to hurry supper which would be, she saw with a conscience-stricken glance at the clock, half-an-hour late.

§ 3.

It was after six when she heard Sammy and his father come in. Harry went to his room to wash and change, but the small boy burst excitedly into the kitchen.

"Look, Moth,—see what I got!" He brandished a blue feather triumphantly between his fingers. "He was in the orchard and I sneaked up on him, and popped him good. I hit him all right, because when he flew, he dropped the feather."

"You don't shoot at anything but blue jays, do you, Sam?" Rosemary, intent upon her boiling stew, inquired anxiously. She could never reconcile herself to the boys' use of their air guns. Harry claimed that blue jays ate the fruit, and that ground squirrels stripped the young trees of their leaves; the boys were permitted to direct their aim against either of these orchard pests, but shooting at other small forms of life was tabooed. Yet when Sam had brought his mother his first bright blue trophy with its sleek plumage, holding it up for her admiration, she had not only been moved to pity for the slain bird with its bloody bill, but had been deeply troubled by a feeling that her oldest had been somehow contaminated. Her husband told her she was too tender-hearted, and she had been persuaded not to press her protest, but, though nothing further was said, she was not satisfied.

Sammy, with eager vehemence, assured her she had no quarrel with him, adding he never forgot the other condition upon which he was permitted to have his gun. This was to count five before he pulled the trigger, considering in the interval what else

beside the target was within the line of aim. He spoke with his customary excited speech, tumbling his words together, pausing a begrudged instant, now and then, to catch a hasty breath.

"*Do* speak more slowly, Sam."

"Sure, Moth,—I'll try to."

His tone was polite, even deferential, but Rosemary knew her words sounded upon deaf ears; his alert mind was already absorbed in another matter. He had edged up close to the stove and was investigating with sharp interest a saucepan in which she was briskly stirring something that emitted a strange, delightful odor.

"What's that, Moth?"

Rosemary, absorbed in hurrying supper, turned upon him sharply.

"You go wash your face and hands!" She pointed with a free hand toward the pantry door. "March!" she commanded as he displayed a tendency to linger.

Mrs. Requa appeared at the screen door with the baby as the boy quitted the room, and Rosemary glanced apprehensively at the clock. The foreman's wife was supposed to return with the child at seven when she came up to help with the supper dishes.

"You're early," said Rosemary, adding in a lower tone to herself: "I'm just about ready."

"Joe had a job to do and I gave him and Patsy their supper as soon as he was ready."

Mrs. Requa set the baby in his high-chair, and went to the tin bread box in the closet, scooped up some of the hard crumbs in her finger-tips and scattered them upon the tray of the high-chair. The baby, immediately interested, began a slow process of securing these one by one with his wet fingers, and conveying them to his mouth.

Rosemary commenced to dish up supper. Mrs. Requa helped her carry in the smoking oval of macaroni and the platter of stew and vegetables.

"Fix Hal some milk toast, and a few of those graham wafers," Rosemary said, departing finally to the dining-room; "you'll find some milk in the meat-safe."

She found Harry already in his place, the pages of a farm journal spread out before him. As soon as his wife appeared, he folded it and placed it beneath his chair. Sammy slid into his seat, his hair glittering wet from the sousing to which he had subjected it before brushing. Drops of water clung to his forehead and dripped down behind upon the rumpled collar of his shirt. His mother observed him with a troubled air, but she voiced no criticism. It was part of her theories in raising her children to ignore certain occasions for reproof.

She turned to glance towards her husband. Harry always managed to be presentable for supper. He shaved before they sat down, and usually slipped on a clean shirt. The wrinkled young face with its lean jaw, the bronzed cheeks and forehead that faded sharply into the white of his scalp at the edge of his bright yellow hair, the slim corded young throat the unbuttoned shirt displayed, all suggested cleanliness, and a wholesome masculinity that never failed to stir her. She liked to feel that these qualities belonged to the man she had married.

She watched him now with satisfaction as he ate, observing he was enjoying his food. The fact supper had been late troubled her and she commented upon it, until she drew the protest, she unconsciously desired, from her husband.

"My *dear!*—with all you have to do! . . . and a sick child on your hands! . . . What earthly difference does it make?"

She was satisfied at last, but she put her chin in the air to indicate she realized her remissness, none the less.

Out of the corner of her eye, she observed Sammy edging his glass of milk out of sight behind the cream pitcher, hoping to escape drinking it. She frustrated these plans summarily by removing the pitcher and there followed the usual altercation regarding the milk.

"Very well, then,—no dessert,—and don't ask for it when it comes on the table."

"Gosh!"

The boy regarded the milk sullenly, and then downed it with eager gulps that left him breathless.

Harry observed his son with a humorous twinkle. He rarely corrected his children.

"You'll be needing a touch of boarding school, soon, I'm thinking," he said.

"Gosh!" Sammy repeated. "What've I done *now?*"

Rosemary interfered.

"Go on with your supper, Sam. Don't tease him, Harry. He's ready for any excuse to dawdle over his food. I don't want to hurry you, Sam, but here we are all finished, and you haven't touched your macaroni!"

Supper proceeded to its conclusion. Harry commented with pleasant surprise upon the dessert, and Rosemary, who had looked forward confidently to his praise since early afternoon when the idea of a custard had occurred to her, was satisfied.

For an hour after the evening meal was finished, Harry sat by the bedside of his sick son, amusing him by cutting out pinwheels from sheets of his office paper. His cheeks soon grew sore with blowing upon his handiwork. Sam, who shared in the entertainment, brought it to an abrupt and sorry finish by falling from the precarious seat of a rocker upon which he had attempted to stand, and carrying with him in his descent the small bedside table and tray of dishes that had held his brother's supper. Rosemary came flying from the nursery, where the small Philip was being despatched to bed, and the racket brought a frightened Mrs. Requa from the kitchen.

"No harm done!" Harry called out reassuringly. He gathered up the broken dishes, and, observing it was Sam's bed-time, caught up his clumsy but penitent oldest under his arm, and bore him away to the small cabin, near the house, which the older boys shared, and which he had built for them a year before, when the increasing size of the family had made more room necessary.

An hour later tranquillity prevailed. The boys were asleep, Mrs. Requa gone, Rosemary had finished her bread-making, the kitchen was set to rights and fragrantly clean; she herself bent over her sewing in the sitting-room by the mellow light of the double student lamp which stood in the midst of the big round cluttered table, the inevitable repository for every stray article in the house. Harry, upon the other side, was deep in the pages of *The Fruit Grower,* spread open upon his knee.

Together they had known three hundred such nights each year,

sitting so,—Rosemary intent upon her sewing with which she never quite caught up, Harry following the lines of type as he read this agricultural periodical, with a blunt finger-tip. Frequently he went out after supper, a swinging lantern in his hand, to inspect some detail of the ranch, or visit the barn to look at the hoof of a horse he had noticed limping during the day. These were the occasions for lengthy argumentative discussions with Joe Requa, seated on the steps of the foreman's cottage, drawing pleasantly on the old briar pipe he always carried about with him in a tight hip-pocket where it bulged, hard and ugly.

Between eight and nine, Harry would return, and settle comfortably to his reading in the low-seated, cane rocker, across the table from his wife.

Rosemary loved this hour. They exchanged few words; her husband's mind was immediately absorbed, but her own wandered. She could think of other things as she sewed: of himself, of the children, of the future. A perspective of their lives came to her as she sat there working her needle; she saw in a vision their destinies unrolling, their problem as a family working itself out. It always comforted her; it gave her a sense of confidence. Just as long as they clung together, working hard, and loving one another, success and self-respect were inevitable. However formidable the immediate problem might be, it dwindled to insignificance as this still hour brought her courage.

Harry never failed to grow sleepy over his reading. His eyelids would drift shut, his head would begin to nod, and he would recall himself with repeated jerks, stirring restlessly in his chair, in an effort to keep himself awake. His untimely drowsiness was unwelcome, and always irritated him. He declared his day was not half long enough; he wanted to spend his evenings studying his magazines, keeping himself informed on world events, as well as up-to-date concerning new fruit-growing discoveries and suggestions. He wrote for all the bulletins issued by the Agricultural Department of the State University, and read them scrupulously. But it was not possible after his long active day for him to keep from going to sleep. Rosemary was aware there was no use attempting to persuade him to go to bed. Again and again she had tried it, but he always roused himself with a violent

effort, assured her it was only a temporary drowsiness, and that he was now fully awake, and in two minutes he would be nodding again.

At ten o'clock she gathered her unfinished work into her sewing basket, proceeded to her room, and set about the small tasks which at this hour received her attention. She turned down the big, double bed, wound the clock, drove Mutt out on the back porch, visited the cabin her boys occupied, assured herself the baby was covered and soundly sleeping in the nursery, and said her prayers. Then, when the moment had arrived for her to extinguish the lamp in the sitting-room, she woke her husband. He always regained consciousness with a startled expression, gazing at her with wide frightened blue eyes, rubbing his face and nose vigorously, then docilely rose, and in spasms of yawning and stretching, followed her to bed.

§ 4.

To-night as he was undressing, seated upon the edge of the bed, he drew her to him as she passed, and held her close in a strong affectionate embrace.

"Rosemary, do you know you're the most satisfactory wife a man ever had? Do you know you make me glad all the way through just to know you're mine, and I was lucky enough to get you?"

Interrupted in the business of getting to bed, Rosemary was taken unawares by this unexpected demonstration, but she surrendered herself to his arms, smoothing his soft yellow hair, pressing her lips to his forehead. She loved him for loving her, and any evidence of his affection brought an instant response. Now he buried his face against the soft part of her arm and breast, and breathed with deep contentment.

"Do you ever regret marrying me, old girl? Oh, you know what I mean! I know you love me and the boys,—but it's a hard life, a tough existence. . . . Sometimes I wonder if you're suited to it; whether it's fair to any woman. I was thinking of Lucy to-day; she got out of it; she wouldn't stand being a rancher's wife."

"Your mother was a rancher's wife." Rosemary reminded him.

"Yes, I know. But you don't mean to say you think Ma's had pleasant time of it."

"Well, I think she's known great happiness, though I'll admit he Judge has been a heavy burden."

"But Lucy has everything she wants. She's got jewels and notor cars and servants! I wish I could give you things like hat."

Rosemary half pushed herself away, and gazed into her husand's eyes with pretended astonishment.

"For Heaven's sake! What's got into you, all of a sudden?"

"Oh nothing. I just got thinking about Lucy and Philip and ll the money they have, and how you and I have got to plug long."

"I wouldn't trade places with either of them for twenty times heir money."

Harry shook his head doubtfully.

"Haven't you ever been a little sorry you didn't take Philip nstead of me?"

"When are you going to get tired asking me that silly ques-on?"

"Philip's a mighty rich man," Harry went on, doggedly, "and you'd married him, you could have all the wonderful things he is ble to give his wife: trips to Europe——"

"Who wants to go to Europe?"

"——luxury and comfort," he continued, ignoring the interrup-on. "Aren't you ever sorry—just for a moment or two,—you dn't take him 'stead of me?"

Annoyed, Rosemary rose to her feet, avoiding his detaining nds.

"You know there was nothing but just a boy-and-girl's affair etween Phil and me," she said severely. "I never cared the snap f my finger for him. Why do you persist in thinking there was ever nything more between us?"

"Well—you know—he was awfully mashed on you,—always as."

Rosemary sniffed.

"I won't listen any longer to such foolishness. It's too utterly

childish, and it's undignified between old married people like you and me. I married the man of my choice, and that's all there is about it."

She moved away and commenced to braid her hair. He watched with affectionate admiration. Her bare round arms were beautifully moulded, the flesh white and hard. Her big, firm breasts shook gently beneath the thin muslin of her night-gown with the swift motion of her fingers. Her neck bent gently as she braided, showing the russet tan extending from under her chin to the sharply defined square upon her chest, where the opening in the Dutch gingham dresses she wore exposed her flesh to the hot sun. Her capable flying fingers swiftly weaving her thick, crinkly braids fascinated him. He watched her wind a spare hair about their ends to keep them from unravelling, when she had finished.

She was a woman in a million, he thought, an incomparable wife, a matchless helpmate. He wondered at the good fortune that had given her to him. He had not deserved it; he had not been in the least worthy of her. The manner of man he had grown to be, all that he had accomplished, had been her doing. He remembered what he had been before his marriage: a pleasure-loving, self-indulgent, loose-principled youth, a hanger-on at the village poolroom, playing coin machines in Ray Bennett's Café, gambling into debt, sponging drinks at the bar. Frequently, on Saturday nights, he had drunk too much, and had been haunted the following day by the fear his father might smell the stale fumes of liquor on his breath. And there was Betty Collier. . . . ! He straightened up, shuddering a little. No one knew about Betty, not even Philip. It had been a lucky escape. There had been no unfortunate consequences; Betty was married, and now he often met her in the village alone, or with her husband, and bowed to her, or to them both, with casual friendliness. But the memory they shared had grown ugly and full of shame.

Weak and depraved! It swept over him as he sat there, staring at his wife, just how dissolute and worthless he had been. Headed straight for the devil, he had been well upon his way to bring disgrace and dishonor to the proud old Judge, pain and sorrow to his mother. And that was the kind of man he had been when he first kissed Rosemary Church! The muscles in his neck grew taut and hard

ipped his knees hard at the pain of his thoughts. Where was e justice that gave him the fine character, the pure heart, the perb courage of a woman like Rosemary, and to his brother an npty-headed, selfish, small-minded girl like Marjorie who had all t wrecked his life?—Philip, who was everything that was fine d generous, Philip, who was up-standing and square, who had ver touched a woman before he married, who was ever big-hearted d good-natured! How was it that he and Rosemary, so deserving one another, had not married and worked out their splendid es together?

A bell whirred stridently in the stillness of the house. Rosemary d disappeared. Even before he reached the telephone Harry knew was the summons they had. for weeks, been expecting.

"Better come over," said his mother's voice. "The doctor's just rived. He doesn't think he'll last till morning. I thought it st to telegraph Lucy. She'll take the midnight train from the city, suppose. Could you ask Joe Requa to meet her at Elmira and ive her over? The train gets in a little after one."

"All right;—I'll be right over. I'll get Joe started and he n drop me on his way through town. I'll be with you in half hour."

As he turned away from the telephone, Rosemary's figure stood houetted blackly in the doorway, the lamp-light in the room beyond ining past her in a golden flood.

"Is it the Judge?" she asked.

"The doctor's there now; thinks he may not pull through the ght. . . . I'm going over."

"I'll go with you."

She said it simply. It was characteristic of her, thought Harry, he bent over his shoes, lacing them with swift fingers, that she ould want to be with him, and though Hal was sick, there had been hesitation. He spoke of the boy, but she replied she had implicit nfidence in Mrs. Requa. She would ask her to move over with atsy to the ranch house during her absence.

§ 5.

Twenty minutes later, in the jouncing Ford, Joe was racin them toward Vacaville. The car lurched from side to side an Rosemary and Harry, in the back seat, clung to the worn upholster to steady themselves against the rocking dance. There was bleary moon and the sickly shadows of files of trees appeare weird, spectral, as they swept past. An occasional dog, wake by the racket of the flying car, pursued them with angry clamor.

Behind trim palings, the white cottage, sitting amidst its riotou flower-beds, purple-hued and deep-toned in the summer night, wa dimly lit. The doctor's car stood at the curb in front, proclain ing by its extinguished lights a long vigil within. Against th drawn window-blind of the room in which the Judge lay wa thrown a distorted shadow that Harry recognized as his mother's.

Inside prevailed the intenseness of grave expectancy. The litt hallway with its low white ceiling, the nickel-plated urn with it frivolous flowers on the gilded metal table, the old-fashioned wall paper, and the tall ebony-framed mirror, illy-proportioned to th space in which it hung, were familiar enough to Harry. Yet th moment the door was opened and they had tiptoed in, the hous seemed strange. It was full of an atmosphere of oppressiv change.

Mrs. Baldwin, slipping out of the sick chamber, closed the doo behind her with careful gentleness, before she spoke.

"Joe's gone for Lucy?" Her lips barely formed the words.

Harry nodded. "How is he?"

His mother indicated by a slight gesture that the Judge wa sinking. She did not appear agitated. Perhaps she was mor repressed than usual, but hers was not a nature to betray emotio She seemed to Harry just the same as he had always known he The scanty hair, brushed straight back from forehead and temple was grayer no doubt, but the placid, cold face, the penetrating ey the thin lips that rarely smiled, the curious expression of unde standing and wisdom, were unchanged. Even her dress was th usual polka-dotted thin percale, and to-night she wore fresh ruffl about neck and wrists. But in spite of her accustomed demeano

arry felt there was a new suggestion of frailty about his mother. ıe was a little woman after all, and just now seemed helpless d not any too strong. He wanted to put his arm about her, comfort her; yet he hesitated; he had always been afraid to ow her affection.

Rosemary passed on into the kitchen, and presently he heard r stuffing wood into the stove; she had spoken of making coffee the way over, and he guessed she was already about it. He ındered about the tiny sitting-room, gazing at pictures and books remembered from early childhood, all intimate evidences of his ther's occupancy, soon to be but pitiful reminders of him. He eculated about the Judge's age. He pulled out the family Bible ɔm the bookcase, and turned to its centre where were the hand- ded, ornamented pages, "Births, Deaths and Marriages." The l book was a Tucker heirloom. In his mother's fine and careful nd, he read of her parents' and her Uncle Fred's death, and on other page, his father's birth date. Seventy-two. He had sup- sed the Judge to be older. His mother, he noted, was twenty ars younger.

Doctor Garrett joined him, cleaning his glasses with a white silk ndkerchief. His brusque cheerfulness jarred unpleasantly. He obably regarded waiting around for an old man to die a tedious ther, Harry thought resentfully. Muttering an excuse, he went out o the garden and wandered up and down among the gorgeous xgloves and pale, fragrant roses. After a time, he began busily to nk of affairs at the ranch.

§ 6.

It was close to two o'clock when Lucy arrived. They had been ɔping hot coffee in the kitchen, and Rosemary was attempting to ke toast over an unsatisfactory fire. Harry had not seen his ter for more than two years. He was greatly impressed with her thes and manner. She wore a tilted grey straw hat, tied with a ft grey ribbon, a grey military cloak with black cloth frogs, and linging grey silk gown with deep edging of lace about a V-shaped ck. She was graceful, dainty, and had acquired an air of perfect mposure. Before her, Harry felt strange, diffident, even respect-

ful. She looked tired after her long trip; her face was pale, a
under her eyes were sooty shadows of fatigue; her golden hair, n
considerably lighter than his own, had blown loose in the drive fr
Elmira, and strayed untidily from under her hat and through t
meshes of her veil.

She kissed her brother and sister-in-law warmly, unaffected
and clung passionately for some moments to her mother.

"I'm utterly worn out," she said, dropping down with a tire
sigh upon a kitchen chair. "That road is dreadful,—they're repai
ing it. . . . Oh, coffee? Yes, by all means."

She unfastened her veil and tugged impatiently at her glove
Harry noticed her seal leather suit-case with its gold trimmin
and her small, daintily shod feet, encased in snug-fitting, gra
gaiters. It was hard to recognize in her the little girl he remem
bered. With a countryman's contempt for fine clothes, he took i
the details of her costume with disapproval.

"Drink your coffee, Lucy," said her mother, "and then come t
my room and take off your things."

Mrs. Baldwin went out. Lucy turned anxiously to the others.

"She's wonderful, isn't she? You know,—I can't help but fe
glad it's the end; she's had to work like a slave taking care of him.

"Yes, it will be a relief."

"What does she plan to do afterwards?"

"We hope she'll come to us," Rosemary said. "She's so fond o
the boys."

Lucy nodded, sipping her coffee, watching them with smilin
eyes.

"It's such fun to see you all again. You look tremendously wel
Rosemary; I never saw you so blooming. . . . How're the boys?

"Hal's been upset, but he's all right again."

They continued to exchange inquiries.

"Phil got into New York to-day," Lucy announced. "The offic
had a wire."

"Too bad he couldn't have been here. If he'd only sailed a wee
earlier!"

"He's been away a long time," Rosemary remarked.

"Since last October. They've had a wonderful trip."

"Yes, I know. Phil wrote me what was quite a long letter fo

im when he was in Paris. Ma's heard frequently. He's been a reat one for sending postals. I guess I've had a dozen."

"How's his wife?" Rosemary inquired.

"Oh, Leila's fine. She's been awfully decent about writing. hey had a wonderful time in London. They'll be home directly. eila wrote she wanted to get back and that Phil was terribly omesick. They're going to stay in New York only long enough o have her teeth fixed, and then they're coming straight to Cali- ornia. They're going to have the loveliest home,—the old Vale lace; it was a wedding present. Did you hear about it? Beckie,— Iiss Meriweather, Leila's cousin,—gave it to her. It belonged . . ."

The doctor broke in upon them abruptly. He signalled to Harry o help him carry in the oxygen tank that stood on the back porch. Vith heavy steps the two men grasped the weighty container and aggered with it to the sick-room door.

Harry was unprepared to come upon his father so unexpectedly. Ie was startled by the shrunken caricature of the Judge's strong, assive features. The imperiousness, the autocratic scowl, the old roud austerity had all disappeared. In their place were the wasted, itiable lineaments of a feeble old man gasping his last breaths. Iis teeth had been removed, and his cheeks and lips sagged tremu- usly beneath the streaked white beard, still smeared upon its outer inges with the brown dye the old man affected. One thin clawlike and lay upon the white sheet, the skin shrivelled and wrinkled like chicken's throat. The head was flung back, the sunken eyes shut ehind purple lids, the feeble lips puffed open and sucked closed ith each labored breath. Mrs. Baldwin stood beside her husband's llow, her eyes upon his face, her hands tightly clasped against er chest. The doctor worked busily, making a clatter of small unds, and presently commenced to administer the oxygen, his ethoscope dangling absurdly from his ears.

Harry turned away, distressed and sick. It seemed brutal to tempt to stay the fluttering breath in the worn-out, broken, old ody on the bed,—the same body that once had throbbed with lusty tality, that had struck fear to people's hearts when its righteous rath was roused, that had made this self-same physician tremble th thundering invectives. Why not let the struggling spirit go peace, ease its departure, facilitate its flight?

He found Lucy and his wife in the kitchen conversing in hushed tones. They glanced up at him when he entered and studied his set face with mute inquiry. He could only shake his head gravely as he passed through the kitchen to the back porch, where he established himself on the steps outside, and for an hour sat smoking his burnt hard briar, thinking solemnly, shivering occasionally against the sharp chill that had crept into the night air.

§ 7.

Towards morning the Judge died. He did not regain consciousness as they all had hoped. Half an hour before the end they gathered at the foot of the bed, gazed silently upon the gaunt emaciated face, watched painfully the fluttering lips, listened with aching ears to the hoarse sibilance of the lessening breath, and one by one filed slowly from the room. Only his wife and the doctor remained with the dying man.

Lucy broke down and sobbed hysterically, clinging to her brother, abandoning herself to grief. Harry feared she would make herself ill with the violence of her weeping. He was unable to quiet her. Her sobs gave place to choking paroxysms. The last moments of her dying father were disturbed by her smothered, strangling cries.

Doctor Garrett succeeded in calming her and Rosemary helped her undress and put her to bed in her mother's room, where almost at once she fell asleep. Rosemary telephoned home, assured herself the children were all right, and informed Mrs. Requa that for the time being she would remain with her mother-in-law and assume charge of the household. Harry went to interview the undertaker and to arrange for his father's interment in the Tucker plot at Winters. Mrs. Baldwin sat with folded hands beside the bed, and gazed upon her dead husband's face with calm, dry eyes.

CHAPTER II.

§ 1.

Lucy stayed on after the funeral. She wanted to spend several ays with her mother, and it was obvious Mrs. Baldwin needed her. he older woman was unexpectedly shaken by the Judge's death. he was unprepared for the universal sympathy of the townspeople, nd for the widespread evidence of the affection her husband had spired. All Vacaville called upon her or wrote its condolences. here was a memorial meeting in Walker's Opera House where ading citizens and friends of the dead man vied in paying tribute him. A lengthy obituary notice appeared in the Sacramento *Bee,* nd there were paragraphs commenting upon Judge Baldwin's death the San Francisco papers. Mrs. Baldwin was touched by feeling at her sorrow was so widely shared, and her husband so generally spected.

But the ordeal to which she was subjected on the day of the neral, and on succeeding days when friends and neighbors came call and voice their clumsy words of sympathy, her unaccustomed ack, her altered life, none of these things could blind her to the ct that some grave matter was troubling her daughter. Lucy was traordinarily tender with her, gentle and loving, new and sur-ising qualities which her mother knew did not spring solely from nsideration for herself. Mrs. Baldwin watched her covertly, guely perplexed, but confident she could with safety bide her me; she knew Lucy's nature and was sure the young heart was ursting to unburden itself. She was not mistaken, and one morning nile she knelt before an old trunk, packing away some of the udge's clothing to be sent to a charitable institution in San Fran-sco, the expected confidence came with many tears and fits of olent sobbing such as had convulsed Lucy upon the night of her ther's death.

Wilbur no longer cared for her; he was in love with another

woman,—a married woman who had been one of their closest friends; and when Lucy had accused him of it, he had sullenly and shamelessly admitted it was so.

"And, oh, Ma,—he told me if I didn't like it, I could divorce him and be damned!"

The girl pressed the back of her hand against her quivering lips her small teeth clenched.

"Nobody knows what I've been through," she went on with rising passion. "I've tried to do the best I could by Wilbur. I've tried hard to please him, I've put up with his whims and fault-finding I've been true to him always; I've earned him an enviable social position that's been an enormous help to him in his business and I've made him a nice home, one of the loveliest in the city everybody says. What more can I do? What more does he want? What right has he to cast me off?"

As Lucy blurted out her tale of wrong, Mrs. Baldwin's expression barely changed. Her face darkened a little, a faint frown appeared between her even brows.

"Who is this other woman?" she asked slowly.

"Her name's Florence Prentiss; we call her Flossie. Her husband's Gerald Prentiss. He's an exporter; it's a commission house in San Francisco: Prentiss & Shumaker, you know. Wilbur and I have been friends with them for years. She has a child,—a little girl about four."

"And what does the husband have to say?"

"Oh, Gerald? I don't think Gerald knows a thing about it I don't believe he'd care much if he did. It happened mostly when he was away; he had to go to the Philippines and he was gone four months. He's back now and I presume he thinks Flossie and Wilbur are still just good friends. They're very careful. He drinks a good deal and spends a lot of time playing bridge at the Club Flossie's always been a flirt; she's had any number of affairs with men, but they've never been anything serious. No one's ever taken Flossie seriously before,—except Wilbur. . . . Oh, Ma! Is there anything so terrible in the world as jealousy?"

Lucy's voice broke piteously. Her mother's thin shoulders sagged slightly and she drew her breath with a faint sound of pain.

"I've known about it for a year and a half. I first began to

ıspect something was between them on a New Year's party we ad down at Del Monte. Wilbur drove her down with Beckie and erald. I was busy getting Philip and Leila interested in each her. The night of the big New Year's ball, I was 'round looking or Leila. I'd gone upstairs to her room to find her, and as I arted down again, I happened to glance over the banisters, and saw them below. Flossie was in his arms—and I saw him kiss er. . . . It was a horrible kiss! It sickened me. I wanted to die. . . I wish to God I had!

"Every time I thought of that kiss, it made me sick. It haunted e. I'd wake up in the night and my thoughts would instantly leap ack to it. It frightened me the way it stuck in my mind. I deter- ined I would not let myself think about it. I tried to believe it as just one of Flossie's reckless indiscretions, and that Wilbur ad had too much to drink. I fought to forget it. We went back town, and I made up my mind I wouldn't be one of those wives ho make a fuss because her husband casually kisses another woman a moment of excitement. I didn't say a word about it to anyone, nd I busied myself with Philip's and Leila's affair. And then one ay—I shall never forget it!—we were talking about arranging a ouse party down at Beckie's place in Burlingame, and Wilbur said usiness affairs wouldn't let him get away, and then someone men- oned Flossie was to be there, and he suddenly announced he'd go. was watching him and I saw the quick change in his face.

"I knew then, in a flash, from just that one glimpse, that he had ome to care for her. It rushed over me how blind I'd been and hat a fool I was. But even then I wouldn't be convinced,—I ouldn't admit the truth. I kept telling myself it was only a rtation, that Wilbur was only playing. I was tortured by doubts nd worry. I suspected everything, I imagined everything. I uldn't go on; I had to know. Then I began to spy upon them! . . Oh, Ma, if I'd never been born! . . . I was crazy with jealousy. . . I didn't know what I was doing. . . .

"It became a passion with me by and by," she continued, choking wn her emotion, "to find out about them. I listened over the lephone extension when he was talking, I searched his pockets, read his letters, I even went through his papers in his desk down the office. . . . Finally I bribed Miss Glaspell, his stenographer,

and then I hired a detective agency! . . . I learned the truth at last. . . . It was base, horrible, the worst that I had feared. . . .

"I nearly went mad after that. At times I was furious; and then again I thought my heart would break. Philip had gone away on his honeymoon; Gerald Prentiss was still in the Orient; there was no one I could turn to. I tried my best to act naturally toward Wilbur. I wanted to have time to think things over, and not do anything hasty. But I couldn't hold in, Ma,—I couldn't do it. . . . I hadn't been sleeping and I looked badly. One morning he pretended to be concerned about my health,—acted as though he really cared! I couldn't keep quiet any longer,—and I let him have it,—told him just what I knew about him and Flossie, and how I despised him.

"I don't know what I expected. I suppose I imagined he'd be frightened by how much I knew. I thought he'd be confounded,—ask me to forgive him. . . . He did nothing of the sort! . . . He just shrugged his shoulders and asked me what I intended to do about it. I lost control of myself then, and I said whatever came into my mind. I told him what I thought of him. I called Flossie all the names I could think of! I told him how sly and sneaking they had been. He found out then I had employed a detective agency, and he was furious. I've never seen him so crazy mad,—and oh, Ma, the things he said to me!—the things he said to me!"

Lucy began suddenly to scream, venting little piping cries, strangled in their midst by choking sobs. Mrs. Baldwin rose and put her arm about the quaking shoulders.

"Lucy,—you must control yourself,—you'll make yourself sick."

Convulsive heaving shook the girl. Her mother brought water and made her drink. Presently she was quieter. Mrs. Baldwin sat down close to her, took one feverish palm between her own rough and hardy ones, and stroked it gently.

"I've always been true to Wilbur even in my thoughts," Lucy said, finding her voice after a while. "There have been plenty of men who've been in love with me; I never looked at any of them! They've wanted to flirt with me; I wouldn't flirt back. There was a man at the *Pleasanton Hotel* when we lived there, who told me he loved me, and wanted me to run away with him. I went to Wilbur immediately. And there was Lester Strawbridge. He was Wilbur's

riend and he brought him home to dinner one evening. I liked
ester a lot. He was different from most men I know. He was
rtistic and he had a beautiful soul. We used to take long walks
ogether, and he told me all about his mother and his five sisters.
enjoyed him; he was a good friend; I was very fond of him as a
riend. And then I saw he'd begun to care. I was terribly
nhappy. But, Ma, I never hesitated. He kissed me one day, and
old me—oh, told me things I shall never forget. But I wrote
im that night that I was Wilbur's wife and I was true to my
usband, and I asked him never to try to see me again. . . . It was
ard. It hurt him; he suffered."

Lucy paused a moment, a reminiscent light in her eyes, then
hook her head resolutely.

"There was another man, last year," she continued. "You know
im. It was Jasper John Fargo,—'Dollar' Fargo. He's the patent
afety razor man,—Fargo's razor, you know,—and he's sixty, and
f course, I laughed at him, but if I'd been after money, he'd have
iven me a fortune just to let him kiss my hand. He brought me
diamond bracelet and tried to put it round my wrist. I was
ndignant and told him to leave the house. I told Wilbur about it
hen he came home."

"And were you happy with Wilbur?" her mother asked gently.
I mean, had you and he been living happily together up to the
me he began to like this Mrs. Prentiss?"

"Yes,—I think we'd been happy. I don't know; I can't
emember."

"Weren't there to be any children? . . . Why haven't there
een any?"

Lucy shook her head passionately, her blue eyes swimming once
nore with ready tears.

"It wasn't children," she managed. "I wanted them . . ."

"And didn't he?"

"Yes, he wanted them too; not at first perhaps, but later. I
anted one more than he did. . . . But, Ma, I couldn't—I couldn't!"

She flung herself at her mother's knees.

"That was why he was angry with me," Lucy went on in a sudden
urst. "I couldn't submit to what he wanted of me; I couldn't
egrade myself. It was horrible, revolting. It was agony besides.

. . . I came home after the honeymoon and I told you about it, then Remember? You said I was young, and you told me I would learn and get used to it, and you sent me back to him and urged me t try and do my duty. I did everything you said. I went back t him and I tried,—oh, how *hard* I tried! It wasn't any use. M flesh rebelled. I told Wilbur it wasn't any use. . . . Don't thin I didn't do everything I could! He wanted me to go and see Dr Soulé, and I went and had a long talk with him. It was hard fo me,—terribly hard,—to discuss my relations with my husband, ever though it was with a physician. But I did this for Wilbur's sake I loved him and I wanted to please him. But it did no good I had no control of myself. I couldn't lend myself to what was s unspeakably degrading; every fibre of my soul and body revolted . . . I didn't want a baby I might some day come to love to spring from what was so loathsome and disgusting. . . . I just couldn' bear it. . . . I couldn't go on.

"Wilbur came finally to see for himself there wasn't any use and he let me alone. There were times when I'd feel awfully sorry for him and I'd invite him to my room, but he got no pleasure out of it, knowing how I felt. . . . And so that's the way it's been for the last few years. . . . What more could I have done? I married him, loving him and in good faith. I had no way of knowing about what was expected of me. You told me everything a mother *could* tell her daughter,—but, oh, Ma,—it's so much worse it's so horrible! Perhaps I'm not like other women, but what more is there I can do? . . . And now he flings it in my face, taunts me with it, calls me names, asks me with an oath what I expected him to do!"

Lucy raged helplessly. Her mother watched her in distress, her slim fingers tightly locked.

"Ma!—Ma! I don't know what to do," wailed the girl. "What *is* there for me to do? . . . I turned furiously upon him,—I told him I'd expose him,—leave him,—divorce him! And he said—he said—he told me to go ahead!"

She buried her head in her mother's lap. Mrs. Baldwin's lip trembled slightly and her hands sought the tumbled golden hair.

"But I don't want a divorce, Ma. I hate divorce. It's ugly and horrid. It would only hurt me and it would give him just what

e wants. What good would divorcing him do? Everyone looks ith suspicion upon a divorced woman. I'd lose my friends; people ould turn their backs; they wouldn't see me in the street! Oh, I now—I know. I'd have nothing left. It would only need Gerald's onsent for them to be free to marry each other, and be received in ie same houses that would be shut to me. . . . And I couldn't ear the publicity,—the newspaper notoriety,—the scandal!"

Her mother inclined her head slowly and said thoughtfully:

"No,—divorce isn't the way; one wrong doesn't justify another. ou can't force a man to do right. . . . Lucy,—sorrow has come rly to you, my child. . . . I wasn't much older myself," she added.

The girl raised her tear-stained face and gazed into her mother's es, questioningly. Mrs. Baldwin nodded.

"I sometimes think, my dear, that women place too high a value n fidelity. Your father had other women in his life. I knew it. here were women,—a number of them,—before he married me; ere were others afterwards. A Spanish woman bore him several ildren; even after we were married he sometimes would visit her. suffered all the shame and humiliation a woman may know. There ere years, when we lived in Sacramento, that I thought only of lling myself. The boys and my faith in our Savior stayed my nd. Yet even when your father was paying attentions to another oman he was always courteous, kind and gentle to me. I don't retend to justify his code, but there are worse things in marriage, ucy dear, than infidelity. I would rather have a man show his ife ordinary politeness and kindness, and be unfaithful to her, an have him true to his marriage vows, and treat her as many en treat their wives with a total disregard to the ordinary decencies f human intercourse. As I grow on in years, I marvel at the traordinary manner with which people once they're married behave ward one another. I have known husbands and wives who out- ge every sense of common decency in each other's presence. I ve known married folk who have borne each other a lifelong udge, and who daily set about some meanness to show each her. There's no brand of meanness like the meanness of wives d husbands who hate each other. That, to me, is worse than fidelity. I could forgive your father for his affairs with other

women; it would have been difficult to have overlooked his ill-nature or incivility.

"It is not easy to justify the penalties marriage demands," Mrs. Baldwin went on after a moment's thought. "Nor is it easy to understand why women must endure agony in giving birth to children, or why our sons and daughters should suffer because of their parents' wrongdoing, or defend the thousand-and-one other injustices of life. God has sanctified the institution of marriage and Christendom accepts the ritual of the Church: 'Whom God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.' That seems very clear to me. Divorce that permits remarriage is wrong; it is a direct defiance to God's commandment. It is your duty and my duty, Lucy,—and the duty of every right-thinking Christian man and woman the world over so to play their part in the bond of matrimony that the union of men and women will become the lofty, pure, irreproachable communion I believe Almighty God meant it to be. . . . No matter what your husband does, my child, no matter what cruelty or what crime he may be guilty of, be patient with him, be tolerant, be ready to forgive him——"

"And go on living in the same house with him, knowing he hates the sight of me, wishes I were dead, hopes every time I venture out I may meet with an accident!"

"If necessary," her mother said confidently.

"But Philip couldn't stand it! He was living a life of misery; he quarrelled with Marjorie all the time. He got a divorce and you approved of it."

"Oh, no, I didn't, Lucy. I urged him strongly not to do so."

"Marjorie treated him like a dog. She nearly wrecked his whole life, and she'd've succeeded if they hadn't been divorced. . . . He got his freedom back, and now he's married a fine, noble girl, who'll be everything he needs, a real companion and a help to him. You'd have your son tied for life to an empty-headed, selfish, spoiled chit like Marjorie, and deny him the true happiness and joy he's found in Leila, which the divorce court made possible!"

"Yes, I would, Lucy," her mother answered firmly, her grey eyes fixed upon her daughter's face. "I am not at all sure but that Philip and Marjorie could have patched up their differences and gone on

appily together. Marjorie was learning; so was Philip. They ad to experience some hard trials, they had to learn to adjust their oints-of-view, they had to find out the meaning of forbearance and utual consideration, but they would have worked out their problem. hilip will make his second wife a better husband because of his rst, and Marjorie will succeed better this time as well. Successful econd marriages are pointed to in support of divorce, but the pened natures, the more disciplined characters resulting from first arriages,—even though considered failures,—are not taken into ccount."

"Living with a man I hate and who hates me is wrong! It's n offense to all my better instincts."

"You think so now," her mother replied. "I did once. You'll ink differently by and by."

"Divorce freed Philip——" Lucy began, clenching her small fists.

"That is one of the gravest indictments against divorce," interupted her mother. "Admitting in his case he was justified,—which, ind you, I don't for a minute believe,—but admitting he had fficient cause, you and others like you who respect characters such s Philip's, eagerly follow their example without their justification. ou act on impulse,—in anger. My child, my child! If you knew ere was no escape for you, you'd try to make the best of things. hil has a grave responsibility. Everyone who seeks the divorce ourt has a grave responsibility, for which in a higher court they ill be held accountable."

"My husband goes from the house I share with him to the mbraces of another woman, who meets me next day and fawns and mirks at me as though I'm her friend. You expect me to put up ith that? You expect me to go on living with him as if nothing as the matter?"

"But, Lucy, you've said you didn't want a divorce,—you didn't ant the ugly notoriety . . ."

"Oh, no—no,—I *don't*,—I don't want it!" she cried, twisting her ngers together in anguish. "That's where I'm helpless. He knows won't divorce him. He knows I hate scandal, how I'd shrink from eing pointed out as a wronged and neglected wife, how I'd suffer have my friends turn from me. . . . And I can't punish him s he deserves! That's what makes me so furious!"

"It is not for you to punish," the older woman said. "The punishment Wilbur will know some day, the punishment that comes with regret and self-reproach will be far greater than any you can inflict. You must show him kindness and be ready to give him what companionship he may ask of you. The gentler you are with him, Lucy, the quicker he will come back to you. He is bound to compare your finer nature with any other he may temporarily prefer."

The girl buried her face in her hands and fresh tears came.

"My dear," Mrs. Baldwin said, an arm about her shoulders, "your mother can read your heart. You love him still, and it is the hurt he has given your love that makes you so unhappy and so bitter. He will come back to you, he will come to you praying for forgiveness. I know all you are suffering. I have been through the same anguish and rebellion and humiliation. I lived with your father thirty-five years, and when he left me the other day, I thanked God upon my knees that I had stuck to him through everything. I've been repaid a thousand times. I won back his love, I increased his respect for me, I made him my fast friend. And more than that, I kept a father for my children, a father they revered and loved. They have been spared hearing an everlasting recital of my wrongs, a constantly reiterated justification of my divorce, an endless and an embittered criticism of their father. No—no, my husband was a chivalrous gentleman, kind, generous, noble-hearted, and as such his children will remember him, and for their sakes and my own I am glad,—I thank God,—I forgave him."

Mrs. Baldwin sank brokenly upon her knees, catching up an old garment that the Judge had worn, and the dry eyes were wet for the first time since her widowhood. In a moment Lucy was beside her, young arms about her mother's thin, gaunt figure, herself shaking with sobs, and the two women clung together blindly, their arms entwined, straining each other to their hearts.

CHAPTER III.

§ 1.

A GROUP of their friends assembled at the Ferry Building to elcome Philip and Leila when they arrived in San Francisco in eptember. Lucy had crossed the bay an hour earlier and met iem as they descended from the train at the Oakland Mole. She at between them on the boat upon its return trip, laughing and hattering with a hint of excited tears in her blue eyes. She had ound Leila handsome and superb, magnificently costumed in a coat f Persian lamb and a smart Paris hat, Philip, fat, florid and ggressively healthy. Leila had acquired an air, Philip a stomach nd jowl. Lucy regarded her sister-in-law with frank admiration, er brother with mild reproach.

"Leila, you're simply stunning, but Philip, here, looks like a eek, well-groomed pig." She laughed a little to take the edge off possible hurt to his vanity.

"You're quite right," Philip admitted, joining in her laugh, ood-naturedly "I'm going to begin dieting right away." He apped his big body and shook his head ruefully. "Too much oliday, I'm afraid. Leila's been scolding me, and I'm going to art taking some of this off. I'll put in some long hours down the office, and let Wilbur have a vacation. How is the old boy?"

"Oh, he's fine," Lucy answered lightly. "I guess he'll be down meet you."

Philip's partner was among the others at the Ferry Building, nd the two men slapped each other on the back and gripped hands armly. Wilbur had grown a mustache and the result was becom-g; it was fine and curly like his hair, with ends turned neatly oward.

"Misplaced eyebrow!" Philip exclaimed, pointing at it and giving nt to one of his short, laughing shouts.

"Tub-a-guts!" countered Wilbur, poking him in the stomach.

Beckie appeared, high-busted and ungainly, a mannish sailor hat mashed down to the level of her eyes.

"Hanged if they don't look like a couple of furriners," she commented crisply.

"Aren't you glad to see us, Beckie?"

"I should *say* so! I'm nearly out of my mind with that house of yours."

Flossie and Gerald Prentiss, Mrs. Perry Hoyt and one or two others came up in turn to greet the arriving couple. There was much excited laughter, staccato exclamations, and hearty hand-shaking. Flossie had a large bunch of violets for Leila and kissed her affectionately as she pressed them upon her.

"Got to get back to the office right away," Wilbur said, catching Philip's attention for a moment. "Ring you up at your home this evening. P'raps we can manage to get together for a chin 'bout nine or ten o'clock."

"Sure," Philip agreed, "let's do that."

There followed a confused moment of reclaiming hand-luggage, an obsequious "red-cap," a jostled passage through hurrying commuters, besieging taxicab drivers and hotel runners, and at last the luxurious refuge of Beckie's closed car. Lucy came with them, the others scattered.

Philip, gazing from a silken-curtained window of the limousine at familiar shops and landmarks as the car sped up Market Street, sighed happily.

"Oh, it's good to be home again," he exclaimed with fervor. "There's no city in the world like San Francisco."

§ 2.

For a wedding present Beckie had given Leila the old Hamilton Vale residence on Jackson Street, which she had inherited from her mother, and in which she herself had resided since that revered lady's death. It was an old-fashioned, frame, double house with expansive bay windows on its first and second stories flanking a pillared doorway surmounted by a small, ornate balcony. It was square, white, and an iron grillwork edged a shallow mansard roof. There was a low, black, iron spiked fence in front, and a garden on either side through which curved a narrow cement walk. A con

rete horse-block and an inverted iron horse's leg with a ring in its oof, which in earlier days had been used as a hitching post, stood eside the curbing that edged the sloping asphalt street.

Beckie's magnificent, white-haired mother, Clara Vale Meri-reather, had been her father's favorite child and a widely respected igure in San Francisco during the eighties. Felix Vale, her brother nd Leila's father, had been the family scapegrace whom old Hamilton Vale had turned out of the house following a violent cene in which the son, in angry rebellion, had defied the parental uthority, and later on his father had publicly disowned him. The Vales were all hot-tempered, and Felix particularly, people said, ad been noted for his sharp tongue.

The fortune Hamilton Vale left behind him came undivided into Beckie's hands, and Beckie was not the type to squander it. She ad looked with no special favor upon her indigent cousin, but hen she became gradually convinced that Leila intended to make o embarrassing demands upon her, but somehow to manage her wn maintenance, to look presentable, and be socially acceptable, she egan to unbend and acknowledge the relationship. She was leased with the girl's marriage to pretty Mrs. Lansing's rich and ood-looking brother, and decided to make the old homestead a edding gift to her fortunate cousin. She had long ago made up er mind the house was far too big for her to occupy alone. She ad her picturesque country place at Burlingame, and wanted to stablish herself in one of the new, luxurious apartments that were eing erected on Nob Hill. It seemed fitting that Leila should com-ience her married life in her grandfather's old residence.

While her cousin half suspected Beckie's motives, the gift proved one the less acceptable. She and Philip would be obliged to take house somewhere, and the Vale mansion was imposing and in an minently choice part of town. There had been an impressive edding ceremony, a brilliant reception in the old home at which eckie presided, and where she theatrically had handed the deed of he property to Leila before the assembled wedding guests amid nthusiastic hand-clapping.

Philip and his wife had departed immediately upon their honey-oon, and Beckie had promised to "do over" the big house for them uring their absence. The massive out-of-date furniture was to go

along with the old place,—Beckie had no use for it,—and their new home, equipped and refinished, was to be in complete readiness for them upon their return.

Philip had not planned to be away so long. Leila wanted to go to Paris and to spend a month or so in Italy. Six months they had thought would be about the length of time they would be gone; but events delayed them. In April when they were ready to come home, Beckie had written explaining that repeated strikes had held up the completion of the big apartment house on Nob Hill, and that she had been obliged to defer moving to her new home three separate times. She was still in the old Vale mansion, and she had kept putting off from week to week the repapering and painting until she could vacate the premises. She urged postponing their return for a few months, to escape the unpleasantness of July and August in San Francisco, and to come back in the early fall to a home which would then be in complete readiness. Wilbur had supplemented this advice in a simultaneous communication, declaring business was running smoothly, everything was in fine shape, and his partner's presence was in no way necessary.

So Philip and Leila had lingered. He would have preferred to remain in England where he understood the language and could get about by himself when in search of amusement. He liked the English; he enjoyed their speech and ways, their even temper, and pleasant lack of hurry. Leila, who spoke French with fluency, wanted Paris and the Continent, and Philip good-naturedly gave way to her as he did in everything.

But he was neither satisfied nor happy. They had not been away from home a month before he discovered that travelling bored him. His interest in new places quickly ebbed; he knew no language but his own; he felt continually embarrassed and self-conscious; he suffered miserably whenever he felt himself or his wife to be conspicuous. Leila had the knack of making friends easily, and she chattered along gaily with chance acquaintances, or went about pleased, absorbed, a delightful prey to a constant mild excitement. Philip was unable to explain his own restlessness until it occurred to him one day he was homesick.

They had been obliged to remain in New York for a month after the return to America, but even in his own country, he had not

und the contentment he had expected. He had usually the whole each day to himself for his wife devoted the mornings to shop- ng, the afternoons to her dentist. Philip did not know what to with himself. He rode up and down on the Fifth Avenue busses, drifted into vaudeville shows, he even made excursions alone to ney Island, and on one terrible day to Asbury Park, which he pposed was another amusement resort. It was stifling hot; he was a constant ooze of perspiration. In the evenings he took Leila summer shows, and they dined or supped on one of the hotel ofs. But all the time he was restless; he felt bored and impatient; wanted to go home and begin to work,—to occupy himself.

The plunging, racketting flight across the continent had been happiest part of the entire trip for Philip. Their house was ished at last, and waiting to receive them; a host of friends were ger to welcome them; business was ready to absorb him. It was auspicious home-coming for any married pair; happier circum- nces for an ideal life could hardly have been imagined.

§ 3.

So Philip had felt, and the thought recurred to him as Beckie's soared up the city's hills, glided about corners, and stopped e an alighting bird in front of the Jackson Street house. Leila o expressed it with a happy sigh, a blown kiss in her cousin's rection, and a squeeze of her husband's hand. There was some- ng dignified, generously inviting, about the old square mansion, Philip with glowing pride glanced at its broad front, its columned rtal, its trim garden. It was a lovely,—a magnificent home.

They trooped up the stairs, the chauffeur following with their gs. Burns, the colored butler, opened the door, and bowed ferentially to his new master and mistress.

"He's exceptional,—worked for the Shorts," explained Beckie, I engaged him. Fire him to-morrow if he doesn't suit. I did at I imagined you'd like to find done. . . . Dinner ought to be dy; I told them to expect you about six."

Leila kissed her cousin gratefully.

"Don't paw me, for Heaven's sakes!" Beckie exclaimed tartly.

"I left you this Persian thing because it's too big for my rooms," she continued with characteristic brusqueness, toeing an immense square rug that covered the library floor.

"Beckie,—you've been simply wonderful! Isn't it good to be home again, Phil?"

Her husband answered with an appreciative smile. It *was* good to be home, and especially to come home to such a lovely house. He glanced through the wide folding doorways, at the vista of spacious rooms, the deep upholstered chairs, the big old-fashioned furniture, the soft curtaining at the windows, the rich draperies that hung in warm dull folds beside the ample doorways. Beckie had achieved marvels with the old house.

Dinner was presently announced, and they sat down without ceremony. Beckie refused to remove her hat; she was going home immediately after the meal.

"You should see Beckie's apartment," Lucy cried with enthusiasm. "My *dear!*—it's the loveliest suite of rooms you ever saw in your life!"

Beckie sniffed in satisfaction.

"I confess I think I've done myself very neatly. I've been a long time knowing what I want."

They talked excitedly, interrupting one another without apology.

"Oh, Phil!" cried Lucy. "You remember the man Marjorie's sister married? You know, Stanley Trevor? . . . What do you suppose has happened to him? He's president of the Market Street Bank,—if you please!—and he's become fearfully important. I saw an article about him in the *Bulletin* the other evening. He's made a lot of money in oil, they say, and now he's got so much he doesn't know what to do with it!"

"Well, that's fine. What luck for Constance! . . . Have you heard anything 'bout Paul?"

"No,—I'm sorry I haven't. You know they were away all during the summer, and I was frightfully busy with the Kermess last winter. It was a tremendous success,—everyone was in it. Constance said she'd write, you remember,—but I've heard nothing from her."

"The office sends a check every month," Philip remarked with

frown. "I mailed the boy some picture post-cards from France
ıd Italy, but I've had no letters. I don't suppose Connie had
y address."

He asked for Harry and his family, and earnestly inquired
out his mother. After dinner was over, and Leila and Beckie had
ne upstairs, he spoke to his sister about his father.

"I found Harry's telegram at the hotel waiting for me. I wish
could have been here. . . . Tell me, how did Ma take it?"

"Oh, she was wonderful," Lucy replied, her blue eyes suddenly
ginning to fill, "so brave and splendid. I think she was convinced,
we all were, that it was for the best. Pa suffered awfully, you
ow, and Ma'd been waiting on him hand and foot for years!"

"Yes,—it was best,—of course. . . . What's Ma going to do?"

"Live with Harry. They're crazy to have her, and she adores
e boys."

"Well, that's good; just the thing. . . . Did Pa ask for me?"

"Oh no; he was unconscious, you know, at the end; was so for
long time; didn't know a *soul!*"

They both fell thoughtful, Philip considering how soon he could
anage to run up to Vacaville. He wanted to see his mother. It
ould be pleasant if he could persuade Leila to accompany him.

His sister, abruptly, laid a quick hand upon his arm.

"Are you going to see Wilbur to-night?"

"He said something about our getting together."

She gazed intently a moment into his face; tears trembled in
r eyes, and her chin quivered.

"He's treated me shamefully, Phil. You ought to know about
before you see him. . . . He's—he's in love with Flossie Prentiss;
's got no more use for me!"

Philip drew back in astonishment.

"You needn't look so," Lucy went on with rising emotion. "He's
mitted it all,—told me it was so! Says he's tired, says he wants
be free,—wants to *marry* her!"

"Why, I don't believe it! . . . What do you mean?"

"Ask *him.* He's the one to explain things. But you ought to
ow about it,—you ought to know before you see him——"

"But I don't understand. . . . You mean to tell me. . . . When
d all this happen?"

She gave him her story briefly, passionately, her small body tense, her blue eyes flashing tears. Her broken-hearted piteousness before her mother gave place to indignation and denunciation before this more sympathetic listener.

"You c'n tell him I won't agree to a divorce," she cried. "I'll not be set aside, and let them whitewash themselves by a mockery of marriage. God knows my life with Wilbur is hideous enough. We haven't spoken to each other for months unless it was absolutely necessary. He is trying to make it impossible for me to live with him, trying to force me to sue him. . . . But I'll *not* do it, Phil; I *won't* give him his way. . . . I'd lose everything,—my position, my friends, all I have. You know how I've worked, how I've slaved and drudged, and the way I've let myself be bored by people and entertained perfect sticks! I mean something in San Francisco now. I won't sacrifice it all just so he can get rid of me. . . . Tell him so, Phil,—tell him I'll fight if he brings an action against me. I have my reputation and I won't let him make me a grass widow!"

Burns interrupted apologetically.

Mr. Lansing at the telephone. Would Mr. Baldwin speak with him?

"Hello there, Philipino!" came Wilbur's cheerful accents. "How about it? Can you get away in half-an-hour and meet me at the office? We can chew the rag a bit, and perhaps have some eats later."

"Sure, I'll be down," Philip agreed in a toneless voice.

As he hung up the receiver, he experienced a sharp vertigo. He leaned heavily against the door of the dark closet. It broke upon his tardy consciousness that he must be prepared to face a struggle between the two people who had long been closest to him.

§ 4.

A flood of light, streaming from a cone-shaped reflector suspended from the ceiling, illuminated the faces of the two men seated upon either side of the polished surface of the desk.

"I tell you, I love her and she loves me, Phil. I can't see as either one of us is to blame. . . . Lucy started to row about it. I was content to let it go along as it was, but she hired a detective

ency to spy on us. We both had been thinking about Lucy and r rights up until then. God knows, I've tried to do the right ng. It started with a mild kind of flirtation,—an evening's usement. You know how those things are. It was when we were down at Del Monte, remember? . . . I kissed her that night, d it kind of set me crazy. I don't deny it. Lucy seldom kissed , and when she did, her affection left me stone cold. Of course, t was just physical, but what could you expect? I hadn't kissed woman except my wife,—well, not since I was soldiering. And n I tried my level best not to think about Flossie. . . . Oh, it's ten to go back and analyze the processes of your mind! But I nt you to understand, Phil,—*everything*. I've been waiting a ar to put this before you, thinking over and over just what I was ng to say to you. I want you to get it all *right*. . . .

"At first, I'll tell you frankly, I couldn't think of anything except t kiss. It stayed with me; I couldn't get away from it; I'd ke up in the nights and think about it. I asked Lucy to go away h me, take a trip some place. I would have liked to have gone ay with her for a long while,—but I couldn't leave the business run itself. Lucy didn't care about just a week or two's vacation. e wanted to go to some damn reception that was coming off. . . . tle things shape a man's destiny. . . .

"I saw a lot of Flossie when you and Leila were married, and er you went away. Her husband treats her like the scoundrel is. He's a cheap sport and a booze hound. He'd come home nk and blow his stinking breath in her face!—Oh, God, the n's a swine! . . . He never gives her a cent of money! Tells to charge things, y'understand,—but there's no allowance. She's fered terrible humiliations: had to borrow from her friends to her bridge debts, had to pawn her jewelry to pay back her ends; I had to go down and redeem her things or they'd've been d! . . . Then, thank God, he had to go away. He had to go to Philippines and was gone four months. . . . It was while he s away, Philip, I learned what Flossie meant to me. She has rything in the world in common with me, Phil; none of this n society business; she doesn't care a whoop whether a person's money or not, who their grandfathers were, or where they came m! . . . Good God, all that stuff Lucy goes in for makes me

sick! . . . Flossie just wants to enjoy life simply. That's n
I like a good dinner and a show, or a ride to the Beach,—and
like a good game of bridge, and Flossie's a cracker-jack player. . .
Oh well, that's not to the point. Lucy and I don't get on, that
all there is about it. She wanted her way, her method of living,
and I couldn't and wouldn't force her to mine. It's hard to ta
about this even to you, Phil, only in justice to myself, I've g
to say there's never been any satisfactory sexual relationsh
between us, and the fault's not mine. There's no marriage th
can survive if that thing's not right. . . . My God,—sometimes
can be adjusted, but it wasn't possible with us. . . . There are me
who demand a lot from their wives. I'm not that kind. I've treat
Lucy with every consideration. I wish you could know just h
decent I've been. But she didn't seem to understand,—she wouldn
meet me half way. . . . I wanted a kid. Hell! what was the goo
of wanting one? . . .

"When I married Lucy, we stood up and had our union bless
by a worthy clergyman,—and we made solemn promises in the nam
of God to preserve and keep the covenant. She hasn't kept i
She hasn't been a wife to me,—swears it's impossible! I do
know whether that's true or not, but the fact remains she hasn
done what she agreed. She promised to be a wife in every sen
of the word; she *hasn't been one.* . . . But now, she won't relea
me from this pact she herself has broken! She wants to hold m
to a meaningless relationship, so that her precious social positi
won't be harmed, so that the scandal of divorce won't defile h
irreproachable reputation!

"And here I am bound helplessly to her, denied the right of
life with the woman I love, who is equally unhappy, and who wan
me and needs me as I want and need her! . . . There's no justi
in this damned world. The man who upholds matrimony as it
to-day is a fool!"

Wilbur buried his head in his hands, plunging his fingers throu
his thick curly hair, gripping his scalp. Philip, in distress, star
at him solemnly. He wanted to check his violence, to calm hi
to reason with him, but he could think of nothing to say. Wilb
swept him off his feet with his excitability. Philip's mind was
a standstill; he was aware only of a profound depression.

"And what have I to face?" Wilbur broke out afresh. "Nothing. . Do you understand that? *Nothing.* Flossie loves her child; hesitates to fly in the face of convention by going away with me. s is a hide-bound world with hide-bound ideas made up by hide- nd people. They demand that the Law and the Church make living with one another proper! The Law and the Church had and in Flossie's marriage to Gerald Prentiss, and mine to Lucy, both relationships are distinctly *im*proper. . . . Flossie's afraid these hide-bound rules, and she doesn't want her little girl to er on account of what she does herself. I don't blame her; I 't ask it. Society insists that if we live together, we first are ed by divorce. Gerald's not an obstacle; he'd be glad to be rid he burden and expense of a wife and child. He doesn't give a for either of them; he prefers his booze and his club. But y won't budge. She won't listen to any talk of a divorce; she its to keep me bound to her, says she'll contest a divorce action bring it,—and God knows I wouldn't do that, if she isn't willing free me. . . . But why,—*why*, Phil, answer me *why* must she ee a higher value on her precious social position than on *my* piness and Flossie's? Aren't we entitled to consideration? ren't either of us got something to say?"

"Well, I don't know, Wilbur,—you don't want to do anything y," Philip suggested pointlessly.

"Who's talking about doing anything hasty?" his partner anded in irritation. "I'm asking you if you don't think that nd the woman I love are entitled to consideration?"

"I guess so, . . . yes, . . . sure," Philip floundered.

"You came to me just before you married Leila, and you asked to help you out. Remember?"

"Of course; yes, I remember."

"Well,—I stood by you then,—and now I want you to stand me."

Philip returned his partner's steady gaze.

"Certainly,—sure," he said awkwardly. "You know me, Wilbur; do anything I can."

"Then I want you to persuade Lucy to agree to a divorce. . . . can name her own grounds."

Wilbur emphasized his words by quickly leaning forward in

his chair and bringing his fist down upon the desk. Philip shifte his glance, and stared at the floor, frowning. He was unprepare to commit himself at once, and hid his indefiniteness of mind behi an assumed thoughtful consideration. Wilbur recognized the o air of deliberation. He rose impatiently.

"Phil—it's up to you. You can solve this tangle if you wa to,—if you'll put your mind to it. If you don't . . . well, you' have to face the consequences, for I'm not going to sit by and se a woman's happiness wrecked and her life ruined merely becaus my wife chooses to be obstinate."

§ 5.

The house was quite dark when Philip reached home. It wa after one o'clock and he had no latch-key. He tried the front doo and then looked under the mat, hoping Leila might have foresee this predicament. Finding nothing, he placed his finger on the be and held it there for a moment or two, then went out by the hors block on the edge of the sidewalk, and looked up at the front o his new home with rising resentment.

A fine irritation began to assert itself; he thought it extremel stupid of his wife not to have spared him this annoyance. He trie to find some pebbles to throw up at the windows, but the street wa bare. Angrily he strode back up the front steps and pressed th bell vigorously. He could hear it whirring inside. The prospec of spending the night at a hotel confronted him, when the inne hall was suddenly lighted. Through the flowered frosting of th glass panel in the door, he could vaguely discern a white figur approaching. A face was pressed against the glass, and he recog nized Leila's voice.

He rattled the door-knob irritably, annoyed by her excessiv caution. His head ached; he had smoked too many cigars or ha inhaled too much of the fumes of Wilbur's cheap nickel weed Leila opened the door a few inches, but he thrust it wider an pushed in.

"I don't see the necessity of being so darned cautious," he sai crossly. "You might know it was I."

His wife blinked at him, rubbing a cheek and eye.

"What're you so late for?" she asked, her voice thick with sleep. "Burns sat up for you till midnight. . . . You didn't take a key."

"I know it," he said shortly.

Upstairs, undressing wearily, his impatience passed. Leila watched him, her head upon a plump bent elbow, occasionally squeezing shut her eyes, easing the pain of sleep from them. Her lace boudoir cap was awry, and Philip, catching a glimpse of her in his mirror as he bent forward struggling with his cravat, thought her particularly unlovely.

"What did Wilbur have to say?"

Her tone was casual, but her husband suspected her question was a cue for him to confide in her. On his silent walk homeward, he had decided to tell her about Wilbur's revelations, but now he was tired, and in no mood for confidences; he wanted to wait until the morning.

"Lucy was here with me until nearly eleven," Leila stated.

Philip grunted.

"Then I suppose you know well enough what her husband and I talked about," he said, a sarcastic edge to his tone.

Leila chose to ignore his ill temper; she was too much interested in learning what Wilbur had to say.

"Yes, Lucy told me . . . after Beckie went."

Philip continued to undress without remark. He enjoyed annoying his wife by his reticence.

"Well, what did Wilbur have to say?" Leila persisted. "Don't be so pig-headed and irritating, Philip; you know I'm dying to hear about it."

He was too tired to continue to plague her. Eliminating details, he informed her briefly, careful not to indicate the direction of his sympathies. He sensed at once where were his wife's, and a curious opposition to them immediately began to shape itself within him.

"What does he intend to do about it?" Leila asked sharply, as Philip ended.

Her husband drew off his shoes leisurely.

"Wants Lucy to divorce him, I suppose," he said in a dispassionate voice.

Leila sat up in bed.

"She'll never do it! She'd be a *fool!* Why should she divorce

him? Just because he begins to fancy someone else, he's got no right to try and get rid of her! Why, it's preposterous! Marriage isn't a thing you can get out of just because you are tired. . . She's perfectly right. Her game is to stand pat, and bring him to terms. I'd fight him in every court in the land before *I'd* agree to any divorce!"

Philip opened the window, sniffed the foggy night air, switched off the light and got into bed. Indecision with regard to Wilbur's appeal came abruptly to an end; in that moment he made up his mind.

He settled his big body comfortably, burrowing his head in the pillow, grunting with tired satisfaction.

"What'd y'say, Phil?"

He made no response.

"Huh?" he said suddenly, rousing up. "Oh,—this bed's grand. Y' can't beat old fash'n furniture."

Leila made a vexed sound with the tip of her tongue. She wanted to talk, to repeat just what she had said to Lucy, to reiterate the advice she had given her. As she detailed the conversation, expressing herself vigorously, she became conscious of a suspicious silence beside her.

"Don't you think I'm right, Phil?"

Philip simulated a slight snore. He smiled sleepily in the dark at his wife's faint exclamation of annoyance.

§ 6.

But he discovered there was small chance of persuading Lucy to change her mind. Backed by her mother and Leila, she was firm in her stand. Although Philip talked and argued with her, he could not bring himself to urge a divorce vigorously. He had small sympathy with Flossie Prentiss, did not admire her coquettish mannerisms, nor her empty nervous laugh. Perhaps she *was* unhappy, perhaps her husband *was* a beast, perhaps in her serious moments she *was* loving, appreciative, appealing. Philip was willing to concede all this to Wilbur, but Flossie did not interest him. His partner's happiness mattered a great deal more, and he found himself regretting that Wilbur could not find the right kind of contentment in

his wife. Philip believed that matters would work out somehow, if Wilbur stuck to Lucy. He might be unhappy, he might grow into what he described,—"a bitter, disappointed old man,"—but even so, it was the better course. Philip had known the pang of disappointed love, he had endured the anguish, the miserable longing. Yet he did not regard himself, nor did, he believed, others regard him as "a bitter, disappointed old man." He had weathered the gale somehow, and had achieved a fair amount of happiness. He pointed this out to Wilbur,—but Wilbur was deaf to all reasoning.

"I tell you, Phil,—she's unhappy; her husband treats her like dirt; she's leading a hell of a life. With you and your English girl, it was just a question of your not being able to agree. Flossie looks to me to help her, and it's a whole lot different to be obliged to stand by and see a man abuse the woman you love and not be able to raise a finger to help her. . . . I could take his fat throat between my hands, and squeeze the stinking breath out of him."

When Philip repeated some of this to Leila during one of their many discussions of the matter, his wife flung up her head incredulously.

"Flossie has very sympathetic ears in which to pour her troubles. I've known Gerald Prentiss a great many years. I don't believe he's any such brute as she makes out. I daresay Lucy could tell an equally effective story about the way Wilbur treats her!"

Philip scowled. The autocratic way in which his wife disposed of his partner's marital troubles irritated him.

"I don't think you know very much about it," he said shortly.

"Well, I know a great deal more about it than *you* do," Leila flared. "I've known Gerald for ten years and more, and I knew his wife when she was little Flossie Green,—a nobody,—and I can tell you——"

Philip picked up a newspaper that lay beside him and began to glance at the headings. Leila bored him when she got started.

§ 7.

They went up together to Vacaville a few days later. Leila was anxious to meet his people. She had heard much about them from Lucy as well as from her husband, and she had exchanged several letters with Mrs. Baldwin.

Harry met them at the station and was frankly dazzled by

Leila's magnificence. They all were. Even the boys were awe by the strange lady with the beautiful clothes, and the earring she wore in the daytime. Philip, too, impressed his young nephews his very bulk alarmed them; he was the biggest man they had eve seen.

Their shyness and mistrust of him troubled their uncle. H wanted them to be friendly, to climb on his knee, to tell him o their affairs, but he did not know how to unbend, to overcome thei awkwardness or his own. He was as much embarrassed and as self conscious as they were. He placed shining quarters in their hesi tating, grimy little palms and told them to buy themselves licoric "shoe-strings" and popcorn rolls. He remembered as a boy i Sacramento these had been the things for which his young heart ha craved, but which he rarely had enjoyed, because there had been s little money. Harry's boys regarded the silver pieces curiously and Sam piped up with the information that "Mom won't let u eat candy, and Hal can't have anything between meals *ever*."

Philip still hoped to win them. He dangled his gold watch befor their eyes, offering to let them see the wheels go 'round, and poke them playfully in the ribs. They only eyed him solemnly. H loud laugh startled them, and he suspected that he aroused in the a certain fascinated curiosity, and nothing more.

Leila, to his boundless satisfaction, succeeded far better. Whil she did not pay much attention to the older boys, she quite wo Rosemary's heart by her enthusiasm over Philip's small namesak and exerted herself to please her mother-in-law. She laid aside he finery, borrowed an apron from Rosemary, helped set the tabl swept the porch, and tried in every way to make herself usefu She evinced a keen interest in the fruit, and listened with rap attention to Harry's somewhat involved outline of his scheme Philip knew her interest was assumed; he knew she understood litt of what was so elaborately explained, but he appreciated the effo she made to win his brother. Her success was complete. Harr was captivated, and loud in expressing his admiration, while Ros mary was not far behind him in enthusiasm for this new relation only Philip's mother was slow in capitulating. She listened t Leila's eager flow of words, accepted her daughterly attitude o deference, and watched her efforts to win her younger son and h

ife, with an appraising non-committal gray eye. She murmured audible thanks for Leila's solicitude, and smiled gently when her ew daughter-in-law, passing behind her chair one evening, dared touch lightly with her lips the straight, thin, gray hair.

Philip glowed with affection and delight. He was proud of his ife, intensely gratified by her success with his people. Leila was tremendously clever woman, he said to himself.

"She's a wonder,—isn't she, Ma?" he asked one day when he was lone with his mother in the shade of the porch vines. "What do ou think of her?"

"She's a lovely woman. I hope, my boy, you will succeed better is time than you did last."

He laughed boisterously.

"My goodness, Ma! She's a mighty different type of person to Iarjorie;—my *good*ness!"

Mrs. Baldwin nodded.

"'Bear and forbear,'—that's the secret of marriage," she said gely. "How old is Leila?" she asked irrelevantly.

"I don't exactly know," he answered with puckered brow. "I on't think she's ever told me. . . . Oh, I guess she's a year or two der than I am; 'bout thirty-five or six. . . . What makes you sk?"

"Oh, nothing. I was just wondering. Curious, I suppose."

Philip's thoughts travelled to his wife. He considered her criti- lly, swiftly recalling the impressions of the last year. After a oment, he shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh well, she's older 'an me,—of course; but not *much* older. ge doesn't make any difference."

"No, age doesn't make any difference," his mother repeated. As long as you're happy," she added, "and I hope you both will e *very* happy. . . . Tell me about Lucy. What did Wilbur have say?"

§ 8.

"You know, Leila, you've made an awful hit with the family," e said that night when they were going to bed.

"Have I?" She turned upon him a pleased smile. "They're

all dears,—especially your mother, Phil. She's a wonderful woman."

"You bet you; Ma's a wonder, all right. She could have accomplished an awful lot, if she'd ever had a chance."

"I think she *has* 'accomplished an awful lot.' Three such children! Don't you think that is a good deal to be proud of?"

"You mean me, too?" Philip asked with the nearest approach to archness of which he was capable.

His wife narrowed her lids and gave him an amused smile.

"Yes, you too,—you big—big buffalo."

He rose and came to stand behind her, putting his large arms around her.

"Don't, Phil, I'm fixing my hair."

Her husband kissed the fat cushion of flesh at the base of her neck, hugging her playfully. Over the top of his wife's head, he studied her reflection in the mirror.

"How old are you, Leila?"

The color flamed into her face and she wheeled upon him, loosening his clasp.

"What makes you ask *that?*" she demanded shortly.

"Oh, I was just curious," he said, his mother's answer finding his tongue. "You never mentioned it,—and I—it occurred to me to-day I didn't know."

"Did Rosemary ask you?" Leila put the question sharply.

He shook his head.

"Did your mother?"

"No," lied Philip. "No one did. . . . What do you want to get so excited for? . . . How old *are* you?"

Leila turned away quickly, ignoring the question. She busied herself with her hair. Philip saw she was disturbed, and did not press the inquiry further. Evidently she was sensitive on the subject. He was always ready to placate Leila; he was afraid of her when she became irritated.

Presently she stood before him, her crêpe wrapper about her shoulders.

"How old do you think I am, Phil?"

He gazed up at her, startled, surprised.

"I don't know," he said hurriedly. "I don't much care."

She straightened herself with a determined air.

"I want to know," she insisted. "I want to know how old you *think* I am!"

Her husband grinned boyishly, and put his hands about her knees, attempting to draw her closer.

"I don't care how old you are," he said affectionately. "I don't care if you're *fifty!* . . . I like you the way you are. . . . And I like the way you make a hit with my family."

But Leila drew back.

"I don't think it's decent for married people to share the same room," she remarked irrelevantly.

"What's the matter, now?"

"When we go back to the city, I want my own room. I'll take Beckie's old one with the dressing-room, and you can have the one across the hall. It's really the nicer of the two."

Philip regarded her with increasing perplexity.

"What the devil——?" he began.

"You're too big, Phil;—really, you're too big to sleep with, in any comfort. . . . Besides, you snore."

He dropped his hands, and glowered at the floor. His feelings were hurt.

"Well,—if that's your reason," he said slowly. "But that's not *my* idea of married life," he went on after a little. "I've always . . . You miss all the companionship, the fun of talking and laughing while we're dressing and undressing."

"I can't help that. I'm sure it's the best way. Everyone is entitled to his own privacy. . . . There's a degree of modesty that should be preserved between husband and wife. You know I've said so from the very first. . . . It isn't healthy for two people to sleep together."

Philip ran his fingers through his hair.

"Damn," he enunciated, forcibly.

"I thought this business of sleeping apart," he resumed after a moment, "was going to end when we got through travelling. You've kept telling me it was just while we were going about, and you promised as soon as we got home we would. . . . I won't annoy you; you needn't be afraid of that."

His wife shook her head.

"I prefer to have my own room. It's much better that way.

A woman requires a certain amount of privacy, and I should think a man would rather have his own room, too. You don't want your wife's clothing hanging about your room. You'll like it much better by yourself,—see if you don't."

Philip wagged his head, dubiously.

"I like to talk and chin along while I'm undressing. . . . It isn't any fun alone."

"Men think more of their wives if they don't see too much of them," Leila said sententiously. "We'll be happier and more comfortable if we have separate rooms."

"Well, you got to sleep with me to-night, anyhow," Philip said. He blew out the lamp and jumped in beside her.

CHAPTER IV.

§ 1.

Leila was anxious to entertain in her big house. Money had de a great difference to her; she drank deep with delight of the edom and security it gave her. For twenty years she had skimped, ched and denied herself, puttering over a gas stove preparing erable little meals, darning and mending her clothes until it s only by a miracle they continued to hold together. She had ays had a presentable tailor suit and one or two decent evening sses,—the latter cut down discards from Beckie's wardrobe,— her underwear was usually torn, ragged and split, her corsets yed and soiled, her silk stockings darned and darned again. w she revelled in affluence, and satisfied all her starved desire the matter of clothes. She had bought shrewdly abroad and re was not a woman in San Francisco that was now so fashionably bed. None knew this better than Leila herself. She was eager display her finery, and there could be no better background, she , than that of the old Vale mansion.

Their honeymoon had hardly begun before she began to discuss h her husband how they should spend their first winter in San ncisco after their return. Society had tolerated Leila good-uredly for a number of years; now, with money behind her, it prepared to receive her with open arms. For the first time in life she felt sure of herself. She could discriminate now; she ld cultivate certain affiliations, she could pay off some old scores t had rankled for many years.

"We must give a dance, Phil, and it ought to be early in the son, so people will know just where we stand, and we want to e it in our own home. The old house is ideal for the purpose those big rooms and wide doorways."

He had been enthusiastic when she had first discussed the matter, as the time drew near, when the plan was to be realized, he

was filled with misgivings. He mistrusted his wife's ability t manage the affair properly, he had no faith in himself in the rôle host, and foresaw he should be ill-at-ease, self-conscious, miserabl He tried to dissuade her, but she ridiculed his apprehensions.

"What perfect nonsense! You leave it to me. I assure you will be an unqualified success. . . . There's nothing to an affair lik this. The floors will be canvased, the Misses Worn will 'tend t the decorations and Ludwig will manage the supper. . . . Oh, know how I want things done. . . . I'm going to order the invit tions this afternoon, and to-night Beckie, Lucy and I will get bu on the lists."

The dance, a few weeks later, was all she had prophesied. Phil saw the old house transformed. Two days beforehand, an arm of workmen had descended upon it. The heavy furniture miracu lously disappeared, the wide carpeted floors of the spacious rooms,— the library, the "back-library," the long hallway, the big parlo even the dining-room,—were covered with white, tightly-stretche canvas. In the square "well" of the staircase, an arbor was erecte to screen the orchestra. The decorators massed palms, great bunch of huckleberry and chrysanthemums in the corners and framed th tall doorways with green feathery branches. A striped awnin reached from the front-door to the curb. Supper was to be serve on the lawn in the back garden; little tables were set about on th grass, colored lights gave an effect of fairyland.

Philip lived through it in a state of misery. He had had a ne dress suit made for him just before his marriage, but he had pu on twenty pounds since then, and he squeezed himself into h formal evening clothes with difficulty. He had grown particular thick in the neck, and the band of his shirt choked him. It inte fered with the circulation of his jugular arteries, and an hour aft he had forced the gold shirt-button into place by means of a glo fastener of his wife's, the blood in his temples commenced to thr and his head to ache. His broad shirt bosom bulged from his ves and the perspiration from his hands blackened his white glove He was wretchedly uncomfortable, feeling he looked ridiculous.

His guests surged up to him affably, shook his gloved finger stiff in their tight kid, laughed easily, gaily, said things his pr occupied mind neither heard nor understood, and drifted away,

e place to others who echoed their laughter and meaningless easantries.

"Lovely party,—it's a lovely party,—what a lovely party,—it's lovely house,—lovely party,—lovely house——"

He slipped away. He looked for Wilbur, but was unable to find n. In the men's room upstairs he encountered only strange faces t looked at him curiously, eyeing his tight-fitting clothes and mpled collar. He discovered Gerald Prentiss here, pouring him- f a generous drink from the decanter of Scotch.

"Say, Phil," urged Gerald thickly, "how 'bout staging a little dge game,—hey? Upstairs here somewheres,—'way from all se damn women?"

"Sure,—guess so," murmured Philip and continued his search Wilbur.

Leila sailed up to him, orange draperies of a Parisian gown ting behind her. As she reached his side, the gracious smile, brilliant look vanished. Her eyes glittered and she bit off her rds with thin lips.

"You look like a stuffed pig! This isn't a funeral. Remember se people are your *guests!*"

She pinched his arm, savagely giving the flesh a vicious twist. Then she swept on past him, her voice sounding its sweetest e more. Philip stared after her, fighting the fierce pain in his d, as he watched her surrender herself to a man's encircling n and whirl gracefully away.

He tried to ease his neck in his collar with a deep thrust of his er, and turned towards a woman standing near, whose face was iliar, and began ponderously to dance, but the exertion made blood pound furiously in his temples: he was blind with pain. Supper saved him. The company drifted through the side-door the dining-room leading out to the garden. Lucy, passing, called him to join her, but he was only able to answer with a vague ve of his hand. He leaned against the wall to steady himself, mb and fingers gripping his temples. When he opened his eyes, big room was deserted, the glaring light of the electrics flooding glittering white canvas floor. Dazzled, groping, he sought the irs, and found his way up to his room. He wrenched himself e from coat and vest, tore off his collar, and snapped loose the

throttling neck-band. There was a moment's free rush of blood pain like fire. Then he dropped with a groan upon the bed.

An hour later Leila found him.

"Phil!—you *fool*,—you——"

She was wild; anger flushed her face; she poured out a flood o furious reproaches.

"I can't—it can't be done," Philip said miserably, with close eyes and a frown of pain. "I'm sick."

"What's the matter?"

"My head—it's splitting."

"You're drunk!"

A flickering glimpse of his eyes showed her she was mistaken

"You've *got* to make an effort," she insisted. "This is our firs party. . . . You *can't* disappear this way. What will people say You're the host; you simply *must* come down. . . . Everyone's ask ing for you."

He made an effort to sit up and dropped back helplessly.

"Send Wilbur up," he groaned.

"Wilbur's not here. He didn't come."

"Send—send——" He could think of no one else.

"I'll send Burns," Leila said with decision, turning to the door "You'll try,—won't you, Philip?"

With the butler's assistance he managed to get dressed again Burns mixed him some medicine, and for a time his head felt clearer until the tight neck-band began again to choke off the blood During the interval he succeeded in getting himself downstairs mingled once more with his guests, and met his wife's smile o approval with a sad distention of the lips. It was quarter past two How much longer would it be, before they would all be gone?

As he stood in a doorway, he saw Flossie Prentiss in a corner of palms, beside a bald, ruddy-faced man. She wore a green silk gown, cut low in front and back, supported over her thin shoulders by narrow frail straps. Green scarves of gauze trailed over her bare arms. Philip noted the sharp prominence of her shoulder blades, the bony construction of her neck. She was ogling her companion in her usual flirtatious manner, and every now and then he caught the note of her nervous laugh. For the first time he was aware of something peculiarly pathetic about her. He could no

ace it beyond the small flat breasts the silk gown scarcely covered, d the white tired lines that circled the mouth from either nostril. t the moment she seemed to him as miserable as himself, and he lt that the birdlike twistings of her small head, the arch looks, the rvous laughter were merely dissembling her boredom. She missed ilbur, no doubt; her heart was heavy and she was probably eagerly iting for the moment when she could go home with propriety.

At three o'clock he went upstairs again, to the grateful seclusion his room, eased his tortured neck and head, listening wretchedly the squeaky whining of the violins, the thump and clang of drum d cymbals, the shrill laughter and excited chatter. Burns knocked four o'clock with a message from Mrs. Baldwin that the guests re leaving. Philip struggled to his feet, fastened a fresh collar out his neck, twisted his arms into his coat the butler held for n, and descended the stairs to find himself presently standing near wife and murmuring over and over with fixed smile and toneless ice:

"Glad you did,—thank you,—that's nice of you to say so,—thank u,—glad you did,—thank you,—well, I'm glad you did——"

They were all gone by quarter to five and he heard the front door ut on the last departing guest with an overwhelming sense of nkful relief. Now for a scathing upbraiding from Leila, a flood stinging recriminations! It would soon be over and he might rtly claim the blessed oblivion of sleep unchallenged. He knew had failed her; he knew she was, with good reason, angry with n. She had a violent tongue; he was ready for its lash.

As the front door closed with a final slam, he sank down upon convenient couch, and dropped his throbbing head into his wet ms. He wished with a long breath his wife would postpone her ade until the morning.

But Leila dropped upon her knees beside him and put an arm derly about his shoulders, her cheek against his ruffled hair.

"My dear," she said gently, "I'm so sorry your head is so bad. u were very good to make such an effort. . . . I really appreciate Phil,—you've been simply splendid. I know just how miserable l wretched you must feel. Come upstairs and get to bed, and give you something to ease that pain. . . ."

He raised his head and looked at her with wide, surprised eyes,

but he was too weary and sick to comment upon her sudden kind ness. Later when he had stretched out gratefully between the coo sheets of his bed, his big body free at last from the confining bondag of his clothes, she came to him with the promised relief.

"It went off splendidly,—don't you think, Phil?" She raise his head in the cup of her hand while he drank. "I think it was great success; nothing I've ever attended has been any nicer. Th music was splendid, and Ludwig did himself proud with the supper . . . Everyone stayed until the very last. . . ."

§ 2.

It was close to noon the next day when he swung off the Sutte Street car and walked along Montgomery Street toward the office of Baldwin & Lansing. He was in excellent spirits, and felt par ticularly gay. He had awakened shortly after nine, had bathed shaved, and dressed leisurely. Burns had brought him up his breakfast on a tray, with the information that the house was in confusio below, as the wilted decorations and canvas floor-covering were being removed. There had been a folded newspaper upon the tray and Philip had sat in the sunny bay-window of his spacious room with his breakfast neatly arranged upon an oval, marble-topped table, and had enjoyed his solitary meal, while he read the generous account of the previous night's entertainment. There was a picture of Leila in the paper, one of the house, and a gratifying heading to the Society Column: "Mr. and Mrs. Philip Baldwin Open the Season with a Dance;—Old Vale Mansion Scene of Festive Gathering." There was over half a column given to it. Leila, he knew would be delighted.

He had knocked at her door just before he went out, and had found her in bed, a breakfast tray beside her, the newspaper open at the society page. Her color was pasty, her face drawn, but she had smiled at him radiantly.

He marvelled a little as he walked briskly along the street at the pleasure such affairs gave to women like Leila. He was mildly contemptuous of them, himself. His wife had been irritable, in a fever of excitement before the event, and the dance did not seem to justify all the worry and work and money it had cost. It was

soon over. He recalled, with a sorry shake of his head, the feeling
ila had displayed in refusing to send an invitation to certain
ople who had snubbed her before her marriage, and how Beckie
d Lucy had argued with her that to discriminate so pointedly
uld be socially inadvisable, and how Leila, consenting ill-
nperedly, had welcomed these same individuals with every indi-
tion of cordiality when they had presented themselves at the house
e night before. He had watched her speaking with bright anima-
n to old Mrs. Franklin Erb, and to Lily Short, and laughing gaily
th Virgie and Arabella Spence,—the "Misses" Spence, as they were
own,—all of whom he was aware she hated with venomous hatred.
seemed petty, unworthy of her; it was so damnably hypocritical.
He found Wilbur in his office with his coat off, one of his cheap
ars tilted at the corner of his mouth, busily figuring at his heaped-
desk. Philip filled the little office with his bigness, his well-
oomed healthiness, his hearty expansiveness. His partner, bending
er his desk, his curly hair in tumbled confusion, seemed small
d shrunken in contrast.

"We-ll," said Philip, easing himself into a chair, "where were
u last night? Why didn't you show up?"

"Couldn't," Wilbur answered shortly, squinting through a cloud
cigar smoke. "Didn't feel up to it, Phil. . . . I'm off that kind
a shindig, anyway. No more of that for your Uncle Dudley.
l let Lucy do the honors. . . . Besides I had a conference with
rmini and the Bragg-Forsythe people. . . . You know,—we're
ng to clean up half a million dollars easily on that Douglas Tract.
ing to call it *Marine View Park;* what d'you think of it?"

Philip elevated his brows, whistling gently.

"Fact," went on Wilbur. "I went over the scheme pretty
efully while you were away, and I figured conservatively,
ubling all the estimates. It was too big a proposition for us
pass up. Bragg-Forsythe and Company agreed to do the work,
u know, if we'd finance them." Wilbur laughed. "I imagine
u'd've been scart. It runs close to eight thousand a month,—
say,—once they begin to sell those lots, we'll clean up more
ney 'an we'll know what to do with! . . . Haven't been out
re yet, have you? Well say,—let's take a little run out there
ht now? What d'you say?"

"Haven't had my lunch yet," Philip objected. "Been promisin' myself a nice little feed over at the Palace to-day. Join me?"

Wilbur shook his head. "But let's go out there right after you lunch, huh?"

Philip promised, but before he left the office he spoke agai of his partner's failure to appear at the dance.

"Don't let it bother you," Wilbur said with a suggestion o impatience. "I can't go to those kind of blow-outs any more. can't *stand* 'em. . . . Lucy was there, wasn't she? She can d the honors for us both. She likes 'em; I don't. . . . I'd like t get away for awhile, take a trip off into the woods. . . ."

"Why don't you?"

They returned each other's steady look for a moment, th thought of Flossie in both their minds.

Wilbur shrugged his shoulders, and an impatient exclamatio burst from him.

"How the devil can *I* get away? . . . What's the use, any way?" he finished in a tired change of voice.

"Do you an awful lot of good."

Wilbur blew a thin plume of smoke upward and eyed th expanding cloud reflectively.

"Well, perhaps I may,—after this Douglas Tract is off my hands. . . . I'll think about it," he concluded with a flash of hi white teeth as his partner turned toward the door.

§ 3.

In his own office Philip was surprised to find a woman and a boy waiting for him. As he stepped nearer, he was astonished to recognize Constance and his son. He stretched out a hand bewildered.

"How-do, Philip!"

"Well—well," he stammered. "Glad to see you. How do you do?"

He hesitated over calling her by name. He had a swift impression she was rather dowdy; "Constance" might be a little familiar at the very first. The boy looked at him covertly out of a thin face, and avoided his eyes.

Philip sat down at his desk and scanned his visitors closely. He was deeply interested; he had not seen either of them since before he was married.

"We thought we'd come in and pay you a little visit," Constance explained. "I'd have brought Paul over before only he hasn't been well."

Philip frowned, pursing his lips.

"What's been the trouble?"

"Oh, it's the same old thing," Constance said in listless tones. "It's his stomach, you know. He don't digest his food right, I guess. We went camping last summer with some friends and I expect it was the canned cream. . . . He's all right now."

The woman was strangely different from the Constance he remembered. She was grotesquely dressed, in the first place,—and there was something common, something unkempt about her. Philip, grown accustomed to such women as Leila, Lucy, and Beckie, with their fastidiousness, surveyed his one-time sister-in-law curiously. Had she retrograded,—or was it himself who had changed? He noticed her ungloved hands, rough and knuckly, like her mother's, her long knobular nose, the red moles upon her face, particularly the large one at the corner of her mouth which gave her right profile the effect of a perpetual grin. She had always been homely, but now she impressed him as uncouth, unprepossessing. He turned an appraising glance upon the boy.

Paul still suggested old Mrs. Jones. He had the narrow-set eyes and the long family nose with a knob at the end. He was small, with a thin, sullen face, and stubborn brown hair, plastered flat over his forehead and sticking up at several different angles on top. His white shirt was aggressively clean, stiff with starch; his knickerbockers fitted him clumsily, gaping about his belted waist, and his thin legs descended into his shoes with undeviating directness. He had Marjorie's dark eyes, but he kept these averted, refusing to meet his father's scrutiny. Philip felt that he should make some demonstration; after all, the boy was his son.

"Come here, young man." He righted his tilted chair and held out his hand.

Paul shot a quick look at Constance and Philip was aware she encouraged him with a quick nod of her head. He drew near his

father, turning his head slowly from side to side, his eyes upo the floor. It was evident he was shy, and Philip noted he shran perceptibly when he touched him. A swift memory of hi brother's three boys came to him. He drew his son awkward upon his knee, and put his arm about him.

"He's quite a little man," he remarked for want of somethin to say. "Yes, quite a little man."

He patted the boy on the back. Paul's tense attitude dis turbed him; he was conscious of a mild irritation. He fished i a vest pocket for a quarter.

"Here, sonny, take this and buy yourself some candy. . . Quite a little man," he repeated. "How old is he now, Constance I declare I've forgotten."

"Ten. His birthday was in July."

"Hum," mused Philip. He remembered how hot it had bee the day the boy was born. "He's growing up. . . . Does—er—i the monthly check sufficient for him, Constance? I should b glad to make it larger if you think it necessary."

The woman twisted her fingers nervously, and stared at th floor. When she raised her eyes there was a blur of tears i them.

"That's one of the things I wanted to speak to you about."

It occurred instantly to Philip he had perhaps been nig gardly in the amount of the remittance. He could afford to sen a great deal more; he had not thought about the matter before He flushed darkly.

"Well, now,—let's see," he said hastily. "What have we bee sending you? How much is it?"

"Fifty a month; but it ain't the money. . . ."

"We'll make it a hundred or perhaps a hundred and fifty, i you like . . ."

Constance shook her head.

"It ain't that, Phil,—I tell you it ain't that. What yo send's enough;—plenty. It's never been the money. Paul's lik my own; he's mine; he's all I got. I never liked to take nothin for raisin' him from the start . . . only now . . ."

Her voice trailed off and again she stared at the floor, an presently she rubbed an eye with a bent wrist. Philip leane

orward, encouraging her by his attitude of attention. He became ware she was deeply agitated.

When she spoke again, it was to the boy.

"Paul dear, c'n you run outside so your Aunt Connie and our Papa can talk?" She turned to Philip. "Is there some ace he can wait?"

"Certainly." He touched a bell. His stenographer appeared nd Paul departed in her company.

"I hear your husband's making quite a success," Philip ven- red when they were alone. "He's president of the Market reet Bank now, isn't he? I saw in the paper the other day here he had been made chairman of the receivership board that's oing to take over the Western Electric. He's getting to be ite a big man. Wilbur,—my partner,—tells me he's president his club, too."

Constance nodded slowly. There was a silence. Philip twisted easily in his chair. It occurred to him she might be about to k him for a loan for Marjorie. His face clouded. He watched r as she opened her satchel and felt about in it, gropingly, till r hand encountered her handkerchief and she wiped her eyes, iffing audibly. Then she peered into her bag again and took t a letter from an inner flap.

"I've been married ten years, now," she began unexpectedly. ou remember how Stan and I started housekeeping in a little ngalow over in Piedmont? Stanley had it built for us. Mrs. evor,—his mother,—and Elsie went on living in Berkeley, and en Mrs. Trevor died, and Elsie married a cattle-man, and moved Montana. He had lots of money. . . . I guess you know, Phil, w I loved a home. Remember how I was always fussing and orking around the house when Mama was alive? Paul and I ere awful happy. I thought it was enough. I never asked for ything more."

She paused and pressed her handkerchief to either eye.

"But I guess Stan wasn't satisfied. I made the garden look etty, and I cooked for him and learned new things and read the magazines printed about fancy dishes. I tried to make m things he'd like to eat. I mended all the clothes and made of Paul's little dresses, and most of what I wore, myself. The

women folks that lived nearby used to say I was a wonder. I di the best I knew how;—I don't want you to think I didn't, Philip . . . Stan never complained. He never said one word. He neve was cross to me, or mean or nothing. He was always kind an good to me, and kind and good to Paul. I don't recall him eve criticizing one single thing. . . .

"But he was awful ambitious, and he worked terribly hard He used to work down there in the bank night after night, an get home late,—'round midnight. Stan's awful methodical. I guess in all the time I've known him, he's never been late once a the bank. . . . 'Bout four years ago they made him assistan cashier. I was awfully glad,—why shouldn't I have been? Bu it was after that I began to see a change in him. He began t study a lot, and Sundays when we used to go off in the woods with Paul, he wouldn't go any more, but used to stay indoors an study. He'd tell me he wanted to get on, and he wanted to lear a lot, and I thought that was all right, too. He'd send me dow to the Oakland Library with a list of books, and I'd go and ge 'em, and bring 'em home. They were big books, all about Bank ing. I remember the titles of some I was always getting renewed *The Principles of Money and Banking, Financial History of the United States, Thirty Years of American Finance.* He kept o reading those books, and studying and making notes. He use to fill whole blank books with what he wrote. I don't know now what I should've done. . . . I tried to help him all I could. I wouldn't disturb him when he was working and I'd keep Pau out of his way, and make it as easy for him as I could. . . . Sta has a wonderful sharp mind; I knew that before I married him

"Then his sister, Elsie, died and left him some money. . . She left it to *us,* Phil. She was a whole lot fonder of me than she ever was of Stan. We used to write each other every week . . . Well, he got the money after awhile and said he was going to speculate with it. That was all right; I didn't see no harm in that; I didn't care what he did with it. When one of his vacations came along, he went down to Texas to look up some oil wells, and Paul and I went up campin' near Guerneville. About three months after that he told me we'd struck oil, and he said that meant a whole lot more money. I was glad, of course.

Why shouldn't I be? . . . I didn't need anything. I didn't want
ny girl in the kitchen; I was all right just as I'd always been,
oking and making my own clothes. If more money meant
mething for Stan, why shouldn't I be glad about it? . . . And
en after awhile he told me he was going to sell the oil well,
d that was all right, too. He never told me nothing, though,
out buying bank stock. He was fussing 'round a lot, but I
ver paid any attention. I was happy just the way I'd always
en. I'd started Paul into school and he was getting along
e. . . .

"One day Stan came home, and I knew right away something
as wrong with him. He was excited and I'd never seen him
cited before in my life. But for a few days he wouldn't say a
rd. Then I learned they'd made him president of the bank,
d, of course, I was glad. Why shouldn't I have been? . . . He
pt staying in the city, then, night after night. He stayed at
e club he'd joined, and by and by he took a room regularly at
hotel. He told me he was working awful hard. He used to
ne home week-ends, but pretty soon I began to notice he
sn't satisfied. I don't know what was wrong; I don't know to
s day; it was me, I guess. He didn't want to stay 'round the
use any more. I thought, maybe, it was living in the country
at had got onto his nerves, and I told him I was ready to sell
rent the house and move to town where he'd be near the
nk, and I told him I'd have a hot lunch ready for him at noon,
he wouldn't listen to that. He shut me up right away.
id he was awful busy all the time, and that he didn't want to
bothered. He said he wanted to be free to come and go just
he pleased; he told me it meant an awful lot to him, just then,
en he was getting to run the bank right and making good. . . .
ll, that was all right with me. . . . I wanted to help, that
s all. . . .

"He began visiting 'round after that. Business-men, who
d big accounts at the bank, he said, invited him to spend Satur-
ys and Sundays with them at their homes in the country. We
n't see him sometimes for two or three weeks. But that was
right; I understood. I was proud he was making such a

success. The women folks nearby used to speak about him to me. They used to tell me how lucky I was. . . . Well, they didn't know,—nor I didn't know, for that matter. . . .

"There was a while there when he never came home for a whole month. He wrote me he was awful busy. I picked up the evening paper one day, and there was his picture and a long article about him. I didn't know he was so important; the paper said he was doing wonders. There was nothin' in the article 'bout me or Paul. . . . I began to think, then, perhaps he—perhaps—he—was—tired——"

She interrupted her recital with a quick head-shake, and winked back her tears.

"Aw, what's the use of kidding myself," she burst out with a touch of her old spirit. "I knew long before that what was wrong. I knew he was sick of his home, and sick of me! I wouldn't let myself say so,—I just kept on shutting my eyes to it. If he was sick of me,—'outgrown me,' as he says now," she lifted the letter in her hand, "what could I've done different? I couldn't change myself. I was just Connie Jones. . . . He married me; he did the picking. . . . I never was much for looks, but there was no use beginning then to go to a beauty doctor, and getting myself fixed up. And I couldn't change myself inside. . . .

"I know once I had to go see him in the bank in the city. The policeman in the bank asked me if I had an appointment with Mr. Trevor. I told him I was his wife, and the man looked me up and down as though he thought I was crazy. Then they showed me into Stan's office. . . . I'll never forget that moment. . . . I saw it all in a flash,—just why he was sick of me. He was sitting at his desk when I came in. It was a great big room with a green carpet on the floor and all the furniture was dark red and shiny. The room was so big it made Stan look small. He was awful polite to me, but I could see he was putting it on. While I was sitting there a gentleman sent in his card, and somehow I knew Stan didn't want to keep him waiting and he didn't want him to see me,—so I got out quick as I could. . . . But I knew then just how things were,—and I guess I'd've thrown myself in the bay going home if it hadn't been for Paul."

She opened the letter in her hand and smoothed out its rinkled pages, winking her eyes free from tears that trickled own her flat cheeks.

"So I'm going back to the *Emporium*," she said with sudden ffected brightness, turning to Philip. "I can get my old job ack; they're glad to have me. . . . He wants to provide for ie,—says he'll make me just as big an allowance as I want,—but guess I can't do that. I can take care of myself without his eing troubled. I've always been sorry we didn't have children, it now I'm glad there ain't none. There's just little old Paul, nd I've found a boarding school for him. It's in the country, nd I guess, if you think it's all right, he'd better go there. . . . couldn't very well keep him with me, because I'd get home so ite at night, and he'd be all alone. I won't be able to keep ouse, anyway. I'm going to board, and a boarding house is no t place for a boy like Paul. The school will cost about sixty a onth."

Philip cleared his throat. He had stared steadily at his desk-ad while Constance was speaking. It made him uncomfortable see her cry.

"That will be all right—that will be all right," he said hur-edly. "Couldn't I make it more, so you could keep the boy and ot go to work?"

"No, thank you, Philip; I couldn't do that either. Nobody's oing to support me,—not even my husband."

"But you'd be looking after the boy."

Constance shook her head firmly.

"No, I couldn't. . . . I couldn't accept it. I'd rather take re of myself. But if you could pay for Paul's school——"

"Certainly—certainly. You do just whatever you think best nd let me know how much to send."

There was an awkward silence. Philip tried to think of mething to add.

"What does Stanley have to say for himself?" he ventured resently.

Constance glanced at the letter in her hand, and unconsciously lded it and replaced it in her satchel.

"Oh," she said wearily, "just that perhaps I'm right. . . . I

thought about it a long time before I did anything, and then I wrote him I guessed he didn't need me any more and he'd get along better without me. . . . He says he's sorry and all that. Says he doesn't think either of us 're to blame. He thinks it's the way life goes. . . . He says he doesn't want to sacrifice me to his ambitions, says he doesn't want a divorce and is willing to stick by our marriage,—but he says I must see he's outgrown me . . ."

She fumbled in her bag and drew out the letter again, turning its pages, scanning the closely written lines.

"'You've stood still,'" she read in an expressionless voice. "'and I've been pushed on by the force of circumstances. I've come into touch with men of affairs, of big ideas, and men of education and culture. This privilege has come to me unsought and I have unconsciously benefited by the association. You and I have drifted apart in our ideas and in our sympathies. I mean it honestly when I say I regret it, and I should never have broached the subject of a separation unless you had first mentioned it. I am anxious for you to be as happy as possible under the circumstances. You are quite right in saying that there can be no sense in maintaining a bond which brings happiness to neither of us. It is not a question of any unwillingness on my part to meet you on whatever terms you suggest. I am ready to remain your husband and to acknowledge you as my wife; will even try to pretend an intimacy that does not exist and which you are aware, has not existed for years. I will do everything in my power to satisfy you, will accept any conditions you may impose to make our continued life together tolerable for both of us. Or if this does not appeal to you, I am willing to provide for you generously or make you an outright settlement which will take care of you for the rest of your life; or you may institute proceedings for a legal separation on whatever grounds you choose.'"

As Philip listened, he could see Stanley Trevor's quick nervous blue eyes, his judicial air, his thin lips and sharp nose, his blond hair and beetling brows.

"Of course, he's got his side, too," Constance said resignedly. "I can see how he feels about it. I'm not the kind of woman to

keep up with him. It ain't just for one or two years; it may be for twenty or thirty. Stan's only thirty-eight. He's young yet; he ought to go a long ways. I'd hang 'round his neck like a millstone; I'd drag him down. I never had any education. I quit the Grammar School when I was fourteen and went right to work for the *Golden Rule Bazaar* as a cash girl. Mama was terribly hard up then and Margie was coming along. . . . Stan's finished High School and he's studied and worked all the time. He deserves to get on. It ain't his fault. . . . He's right, of course; I've just stood still."

"Well, why don't you ask him to make you a settlement as he suggests? Make him come through with a big fat sum. *I* would,—by Jingo! . . . Make him pay you a hundred thousand dollars!"

"I couldn't take it, Phil. I don't want money."

"He has no *right* to treat you in this way."

"I ain't got no right to hold onto him, either. Marriage ain't that; it's a 'give-and-take' kind of a proposition, I figure, and when it ain't that, it ain't a right kind of marriage. You can't promise to love a person all your life. That's where I think the ministers are wrong. It's like asking folks to promise they're going to eat pork for the rest of their lives and like it all the time. How can you know whether you're going to be satisfied? . . There's no way in God's world I know of that helps you to find that out beforehand. And so I think when one of the parties feels the marriage is a bad bargain, it's up to the other to let him off. . . . So I'm going back to where I started. They think a whole lot of me at the *Emporium,* and I'm going to save up, and perhaps in a year or two I'll join Marge."

Philip with his thoughts on Stanley Trevor's selfishness twitched slightly at the sudden mention of his first wife's name. He cleared his throat, and nervously felt for a cigar, biting off the tip with a sharp nip of his big teeth.

"How is—what do you hear from your sister? . . . How's she getting along?"

"Oh, I guess Margie's getting along all right now. She ain't living with Roy North any more. . . . Guess you knew that. . . . No? . . . They quit each other; couldn't get along. . . . I guess

Margie and me weren't cut out for wives," she interjected with a dry bitter laugh. "Roy lost his job with the syndicate he was working for, and then he was crazy to do a dance turn with Marjorie in vaudeville. Everyone was crazy about dancing after the hit the Castles made. He and Margie had a try-out and the booking people said the turn was all right, but there ought to be some singing—a song or two, you know. Margie's got no voice; never had. So Roy got another girl who could sing, and they went on the road, and left Margie in New York City. . . . And then,—I don't know what happened. . . . I guess he just got tired sending her money. He quit writing after a while and she never heard another word from him. She was broke and I sent her something once or twice. and then, a little while ago, she wrote me she was through with Roy forever, and she and a Mrs. Lightbody were going to open a boarding house for the summer down at Asbury Park. She's been there ever since June, and I guess they made something out of it. She writes me she's going to try the movies. Somebody told her she was sure to make a hit; she says they tell her she's got just the right kind of face for it."

Philip nodded. Marjorie ought to photograph well. He was surprised to discover how much her fortunes interested him.

"Of course, Connie, I knew she wouldn't get on with that fellow. He was no darn good."

"Oh, Phil,—*I* knew that. Didn't I talk to Margie 'till I was blue in the face? But you could'n't make her see reason. Guess she found out all about him for herself."

A vague impulse came to Philip to give Constance a couple of hundred dollars to send her sister without betraying its source. He glanced at the check book lying on his desk. It embarrassed him to speak about it, and as he hesitated the inclination passed.

"Well, I wish her luck," he said awkwardly. "I don't see why she shouldn't do very well in the movies. She has looks, and I think she could act . . ."

"Yes, and she's got the kind of prettiness she won't lose for a long time."

Constance rose.

"Guess I'll be going, Phil. You've been awful kind. You might arrange to open a charge account at *Thompson's*. I'll get

Paul's outfit there,—his uniforms and things,—and it will make it easy."

"Sure,—I'll take care of that. . . . There's nothing I can do for you personally, Constance?"

As he held her hand at parting, he felt for the first time a sudden wave of the old warm affection.

Poor old Connie!—By God, it was a shame!—The damned selfish beast!

He stared out upon the empty lot next door through the window of his small office, and chewed savagely upon his cigar.

§ 4.

Riding home on a crowded Jackson Street cable-car late one foggy afternoon a few days later, Philip, as he clung to the stanchion of the dummy, decided he would delay no longer in buying a new motor car. Getting home in this fashion was altogether too tedious, too disagreeable. He wanted a comfortable little closed car he could drive himself.

He had discovered soon after his return to San Francisco that delivery of the car he preferred could not be promised under six months, and he had hesitated to accept one of another make.

Up the hill, swiftly overtaking the cable-car, rushed a powerful automobile upon which his attention instantly focused. He leaned forward to identify its make, and as he did so, recognized Wilbur and Flossie Prentiss in the front seat.

The sight shocked him; he had not seen them together before; he was struck with distinct unpleasantness. Flossie was talking earnestly, her mouth close to her companion's ear; Wilbur's face was set, frowning and intent, his eyes fixed upon the narrow passage between the travelling cable-car and the curb.

"D—damn." The word slipped from Philip unconsciously.

It was all wrong; it was vulgar and improper; it offended him. Wilbur ought to be at home with Lucy no matter how he felt about her; his place was with his wife. This flirting around, these clandestine meetings, secret telephone messages, and exchange of love letters,—he suspected all,—bah, it was sickening! It was damnably undignified; it was rotten. Impatiently he

shrugged his big shoulders as if to rid himself of its ugliness. He would have an honest-to-God talk with Wilbur; a straight-from-the-shoulder confab! Wilbur would have to cut out Flossie,—that was all there was about it.

He swung off the cable-car in front of his house, ran up the front steps and let himself in with his latch-key. It was his custom to call out "Woo-woo?" when he came in; it was his way of announcing himself. Leila, if she were in or by herself, would answer in similar fashion, usually from the second floor. She would come out of her room, stand at the rail of the banisters that skirted the well of the stairs and look down upon him as he came up. He always put his arms about her when they met, and she would turn her cheek for his kiss.

But to-night she answered him from the back-parlor where she had a small desk of her own, at which she wrote her notes and made out her checks. He bent over and kissed her. He liked the smooth touch of her cheek and the perfume she used. The scent was particularly hers, faint, elusive, provocative; he had never smelled it any place else or upon any other woman.

She turned up the corner of her chin to meet his kiss, but kept her gaze still on the note-paper before her. As he sank heavily into a wicker rocker, she fixed him with a searching eye.

"Do you know what day October 12th happens to be?"

Philip frowned, lifting an eyebrow.

"Why,—let's see . . . it's Wednesday, a week from to-morrow. . . . Oh, I have it!" A light broke upon him. "It's a holiday, isn't it? Wasn't Columbus born that day, or didn't he do something unusual?"

Leila squinted at him from between narrowed lids, a dry, hopeless smile twisting her mouth.

"I'm well aware it's Wednesday, and I believe it also marks the day that America was discovered. . . . But doesn't it mean anything else to you? Don't you know what day it is? What occasion?"

He stared at the floor, frowning fiercely. He tried to think of a forgotten birthday; Leila's was in May.

"I wouldn't *expect* you to remember!" his wife remarked with mild sarcasm. "It happens to be our wedding anniversary——"

"Oh, I knew *that*. I knew *that* of course. . . . I planned to surprise you with something. . . . Really, I did. . . ."

Leila sniffed incredulously. She dismissed the subject with a wave of her hand.

"Listen here; we ought to give a dinner,—a big dinner,—that night. Eighteen or twenty people, I should say. You remember everyone was exceedingly gracious to us when we were married, and there're a few I am anxious to be nice to. . . . I've written a list; tell me what you think about it. There'll be Wilbur and Lucy, and Beckie,—I'll get Joe Gillespie for Beckie; he's always amusing,—and Gerald and Flossie, and Mr. and Mrs. Franklin Erb, and Lily Short——"

Philip's attention wandered; he was not interested; these affairs were Leila's anyway. If there was going to be a dinner, he would have to order some new dress shirts right away; they would have to rush to get one ready for him in time. He disliked formal entertaining; he foresaw another disagreeable evening. Leila was always excited and irritable beforehand, and she acted so affectedly and superciliously when she was hostess. She was not a bit like Lucy; she hadn't Lucy's knack. At his sister's house, he always met people he now knew fairly intimately, and was sure of having a good time. . . . Franklin Erb!—Philip disliked him. He was sure Erb considered him a "four-flusher,"—an upstart!

He dared say something of this to Leila when she had finished, but she eyed him coldly, and without replying continued to discuss the details of the dinner. He reddened. Her glance was eloquent, conveying far more effectively than any words her contempt for his opinion. He contemplated an angry protest,—then, with a tired shrug, decided it did not matter.

"You'll see about the wine?" she asked. "Get the best,—you know."

"What do you want?"

She jotted down a list and handed it to him.

"Order it in the morning, and be sure to speak to Wilbur. I want him particularly. He was your best man at the wedding, and he ought to be here. If there are any toasts to be drunk, it's his place to propose them. Then, I've other reasons. . . . Mrs.

Erb, in that innocent inquiring little way of hers, asked ever so casually the other day when the Lansings were mentioned, 'Is it true there's trouble there?' If Wilbur doesn't want people talking about him and Flossie Prentiss, he'd better be seen occasionally in public with his wife,—you tell him."

"I saw them, to-night, coming home in Wilbur's car," Philip said.

"I saw them, myself, having tea at the St. Francis the other afternoon! Really, Phil, you'll have to talk to Wilbur. They oughtn't to do things like that. It's bound to start people talking. . . . It isn't fair to Lucy. She's your sister,—remember that."

"I made up my mind, as I came in the house, just a little while ago, I'd have to have it out with Wilbur. . . . Things *can't* go on this way. It isn't right; it's rotten. I'm going to tell him he'll have to cut Flossie out."

"And tell him from me he's *got* to come to my dinner."

§ 5.

Philip opened the door and glanced into his partner's office the next morning, but the room was empty, and when he inquired for him, Wilbur's stenographer informed him that Mr. Lansing had left on the Portland train the previous night to visit the Henderson ranch. This was the five thousand acre tract in Yolo County which Wilbur had bought for Baldwin & Lansing some time before. Part of it, Philip knew, was being put out in alfalfa to help carry it. Wilbur had told him all about the deal with great enthusiasm soon after his return. But Miss Glaspell did not know when Mr. Lansing would be back; he had called up late in the afternoon and had left word with her to tell Mr. Baldwin he had been suddenly called north.

It was the next day that the office boy brought Philip the engraved card of Mr. Gerald F. Prentiss. Philip stared at it puzzled, uncomfortable. He had never liked Prentiss; he was too facetious, too presuming, too garrulous.

But the usual jocular urbanity was missing from his caller's

manner as he entered Philip's office. His face was chalk white, his lips bloodless, while his pasty cheeks and the fat roll of flesh beneath his jaw hung slack and flabby. His glance was uncertain as he shook hands with Philip, his eyes roving about the room. Philip made him sit down, and offered him a cigar which he declined. He continued to shift his gaze, now and then shooting a quick look toward the office door, twisting his derby hat about in his hands nervously.

"Lansing in?" he demanded abruptly.

Philip explained that Wilbur was out of town, had gone up to Yolo County for a day or so, but was expected back that day or the next.

Prentiss studied him narrowly, now, his eyes fixed on his face. "When did he tell you that? . . . Did you hear from him?"

Philip gave his caller frankly all the information he had. As he spoke, something in the other's manner arrested him. A premonition of calamity rushed down upon him, closing him in. He shut his jaw; the blood thumped in his temples; he returned his caller's steady look with widening eyes.

"My God!" The exclamation was barely audible. The two men sat staring at one another, motionless, silent.

Prentiss's face suddenly jerked spasmodically, and he rose to his feet.

"I wanted to make sure," he said thickly.

"What makes you think so?" Philip leaned forward with shut fists.

"I know," the other answered with finality. He faced Philip abruptly.

"Didn't he tell you anything about it? . . . Didn't he give you a hint?"

"Before Heaven, Gerald,—he never said a word to me. . . . I don't know where they could have gone to. . . . My *God!*" He sank back into his chair as there rushed upon him a realization of consequences.

"I wasn't home night before last," Prentiss said stonily. "She knew I wasn't coming home, and last night I was at the club, playing bridge. It was a bad evening for me all 'round. I didn't

get home until late. . . . This morning I found she'd gone. She'd fired the nurse and the cook before she left. The kid's bed hadn't been slept in. . . ."

He put his fist on the desk and emphasized what he said next with firm impacts of his closed hand.

"You tell him, Phil, to keep out of my way,—tell him to *stay* out. I'll shoot him at sight. . . . He ought to know that. He's welcome to her,—he can have 'em both,—I don't give a God damn. . . . But he can't rob me of my wife and child and then come back here to 'Frisco, and make a monkey out of me,—'fore everybody. I'll kill him, s'help me God." His voice shook a little as its pitch increased. "You understand that, do y', Baldwin? Y'tell him when you find out where he is to stay away from here. He can't make a monkey out of me and laugh in my face. No son-of-a-bitch can make a holy show of me, and get away with it!" His chin trembled, and he clipped off his final words as he clenched his jaw.

"There's just one more thing," he said after a moment. "There's no use in letting the papers get wind of this. You won't want to, will you? I don't give a damn about *them,* but I don't want to be made a laughing-stock,—get me?"

"Certainly, Gerald,—of course. I shan't want anyone to know on account of Mrs.—for Lucy's sake. No, there's no need of it."

"All right. You keep your mouth shut, and they'll get nothing out of me."

He stood staring at Philip a moment longer as if trying to remember if there was anything more to say, then turned abruptly and walked from the room, clapping the frail office door closed behind him with a smart slam.

Philip sat on, stunned, motionless. Over and over he kept repeating: "I don't believe it,—I just don't believe it." No sound escaped him; his lips barely formed the words. Yet with crushing force the conviction grew upon him, it was true. One predominating emotion then laid hold of him: Wilbur had failed to confide in him, had left him without a word, without even saying good-bye. He was struck to the heart, stabbed with what seemed to be his friend's and partner's base desertion.

Presently he jumped to his feet, and quickly passed into Wilbur's office, shutting the connecting door behind him. He sat down at the desk and began to go through it, jerking open drawers, fumbling their contents. He could find no sealed envelope,—no message,—nothing. He rang for Miss Glaspell.

"Did Mr. Lansing say how long he expected to be away?"

The girl shook her head.

"No, sir, but I thought maybe he might be back to-morrow or by the end of the week."

"He left no word for me?"

"No, sir."

He glanced hastily at the small calendar on his partner's desk and examined its pages. There were few entries on the blank memorandum leaves, and these might have been made weeks ago. He asked the stenographer to bring him Wilbur's check book, but was informed that Mr. Lansing had had it in his own possession for several days.

"So he made up his mind deliberately," thought Philip when he was alone. "He's been meaning for weeks to cut and run! . . . And he never told me!"

"*Wilbur,*" he said under his breath, and again: "*Wilbur.*"

§ 6.

He let himself into his house, glancing into the back-parlor for his wife before he climbed the stairs. He did not call out; his heart was too heavy. Leila was in her room, lying on a couch, clad in a lace negligee. Startled at his unexpected entrance, she half roused herself, and he had a swift impression she looked white and sickly.

He sank into a chair and regarded her gloomily. It came to him, as he studied her, he could count neither upon her sympathy nor her understanding. She could not grasp the significance of his news or appreciate what it meant to him.

"What brings you home this time in the morning?" she asked. Her eyes were fixed intently upon his face; there was almost alarm in them.

"Wilbur and Flossie Prentiss have run away together," h announced bluntly.

Leila continued to regard him steadily, without change o expression, for some minutes. Then her face suddenly wrinkled and she began to whimper, presently to cry violently, burying he head in her hand and the cushion that supported it.

Philip had expected no such emotional reception of his news He watched her sourly. As he had foreseen, she was concerne only with how the elopement might affect herself; she had n thought for him. At the moment she appeared dishevelled grotesque, ugly.

"I suppose," he said bitterly, "this upsets your dinner."

Sobbing for a moment strangled her. She choked, struggle for breath, then raised herself, one hand tight against her bar throat. She spoke with difficulty.

"I'm going to have a child," she gasped.

CHAPTER V.

§ 1.

TEN days later Philip received a letter from Wilbur, postarked New York City.

"My dear old Philip: You know by this time what course of tion I decided to take. I hesitated a long time before making o my mind, and my indecision was solely on your account. I faced e choice of breaking with you or the woman I love, and it was e certainty that some day you will again feel kindly toward me at led me to believe the best course was for me to go away. couldn't find the nerve to talk to you, or even to say good-bye. s I saw it,—and still see it,—it would have been a tough propotion to put up to you; you would have to side with either Lucy, our sister, or with me. I know you're awfully sore at me, and I rtainly feel rotten to think about it. But please remember, old y, that what I've done hasn't been merely to gratify my own sires. I've saved the woman who has come to mean so much to me om an intolerable situation. I couldn't stand by any longer and e it go on. The last offense was when he was beastly drunk he isted the little girl's arm and struck her. I was the only one ossie had to turn to, and I just *had* to help her out.

"I've tried to do what I think is the square thing by everyone. leave my share of the business to you and Lucy. If either the enderson ranch or the Douglas Tract turn out right, you'll clean in the neighborhood of half-a-million at the closest calculations. we've never incorporated, you need no legal authority from me go ahead, but I've left a full power-of-attorney for you with rmini. He also has the key to my safe deposit box, and I've itten him to turn it over to you when you ask for it. You'll find the box a deed of the home for Lucy, and some S.P. stock, which like you to hand over to her as well. I want the Berkeley partments to be given to her, too. There's $27,000 due on this operty, for which the Bank of Italy has my note on a deed of st. It's easily worth $50,000. You'll find a lot of other stock the box, but most of it's worthless, unless the oil turns out O.K. e taken with me only what I had in the bank after I sold out

my interest in the Tonopah mine to Cliff White. It was worth lot more than I got for it, but it was the easiest money I co lay my hands on. The rest is Lucy's, and I feel certain I could leave her interests in better hands.

"I want you to try and forget me, Philip. I want San Franci to forget me. I'm thirty-three years old, and I figure I've got best part of my life ahead of me. Flossie and I are not going make the mistake of trying to settle down in some other city in U.S., and be forever afraid of some old Friscoite turning up a telling the neighborhood we're not legally married. I wouldn't ca but it would make Flossie suffer. Let Lucy stand on her rig Don't be offended if I say I hope it does her a lot of good. can't marry again, herself, unless she obtains a divorce, and sor how I can't see her staying single. If she had had the sense to ag to a separation, as I urged, she wouldn't have driven Flossie a me away. It was her inflexibility about this that forced us to ta matters into our own hands.

"I don't think you will ever hear from me again. Don't t anyone even this,—please: we are on our way to South America. the Argentine or Brazil. I don't know where we'll settle. No o down there will care whether our union has been blessed by t Church and State or not. It's nobody's business but our ow anyway. We've pledged fidelity to each other, and that satis us both. And I want you to know I've found real happiness at la I didn't know what perfect companionship and love could be li I'll be blamed back there in San Francisco, and generally damn but I think I've done what was right. To have kept Flossie a me apart and denied us our rightful happiness would have been greater crime than either one of us has committed in taking c destinies into our own hands.

"Try to think as kindly of me as you can, Phil. You're t only one I care a hang about, and I shall try to make mys believe you aren't going to feel sore at me forever. There is good in giving you an address that will reach me. It's better f you to cut me out for good and all. Consider that I'm dead;—g killed in an accident, and think the best you can of me. If I ga you an address, it would only put up to you again a choice betwe me and Lucy, and I don't want that. Your duty's by your sister, no matter how you feel about me. It's better just to forget abo me.

"We sail in the morning and we'll be far upon our way by t time this reaches you. I wish you all the luck in the world. I ho you'll be as happy as I know I'm going to be. I'm not going to guilty of writing you any mawkish sentiments, especially wh you're thinking a lot of hard things about me, but I guess you mu realize it's been pretty tough on me to pass you up like th

orgive me if you can and make up your mind to forget me. Once ore,—good luck, and so long.

"Ever your friend,

"Wilbur Lansing."

§ 2.

Leila took a great deal of pride and glory unto herself from he fact she was going to have a baby. She was greatly frightened t first; convinced she would die in child-birth, but her physician ssured her she had no reason to be unduly alarmed. There was othing unusually remarkable about having a baby at her age, nd the probabilities were she would run her course quite nor- ally. As she grew accustomed to the idea and the nausea and orning discomfort passed, she began to assume a tremendously nportant air, and to make a great deal of fuss and pother over he rôle of expectant mother.

"*Well!*" she would exclaim to the intimate friends who came to e her, "what do you know about me? I guess none of you er thought *I'd* have a child." She would laugh with a little eprecating shrug of her shoulders. "Of course, I didn't expect he quite so soon. Philip and I weren't prepared to have one *st* yet,—but, really, I don't mind in the least. I had a lot of ce dinners planned for this winter,—but what of it? People ill understand, and if they don't,—if they're stupid enough not have foreseen this possibility,—well, then, I really don't care!"

She began eagerly to read every obstetrical book on which she uld lay her hands, and when the supply ran out read, with what emed to Philip grewsome relish, a collection of famous French imes and horror stories by Dumas which she discovered in one the old Vale bookcases. She glibly made use of medical terms at startled him and he suspected she rather enjoyed their effect. e was rather pleased at the thought of a baby; a child would ing a quality of dignity to them both; it would make them pear settled, increase people's respect. He earnestly hoped would be a girl; if it was, Leila proposed to name the child ter his sister, but in the event of a boy, she wanted him called elix," after her father.

§ 3.

While Leila preened herself on the prospect of becoming mother, Lucy quailed at the thought of facing her friends a society as an abandoned wife. She was crushed by Wilbu desertion, wounded, humiliated. Like an imprisoned bird, beati its wings in wild terror against the bars of a cage, she flew Beckie Meriweather and begged her to go away with her. N matter how carefully guarded, inevitably the truth was sure leak out. Beckie consented to make another trip with her Honolulu. They could spend the winter there, and by late sprir everybody would have long ago heard that Wilbur Lansing h run off with Mrs. Gerald Prentiss, and would have grown tir discussing the scandal.

Before she sailed, acting on Beckie's and Leila's combin advice, Lucy filed a petition for divorce. Since Wilbur had go and was never coming back, there was no reason, her frien agreed, why she should remain legally bound to him.

"You're going to have everybody's sympathy," Leila urge "nobody'll *think* of criticizing you. You simply have *got* to get divorce. You can't go on being Wilbur's wife, when he's run c with somebody else's. It's absolutely the only course open you, now. . . . Besides, you may meet some millionaire down the Islands you'll like very much. . . ."

"O—ooo!" shuddered Lucy. "No more husbands for me. . .

"Nonsense," snapped Beckie.

They sailed early in December.

§ 4.

Philip settled down grimly to managing the affairs of Baldwi & Lansing. For nearly four years he had allowed Wilbur to ru the business as he pleased. There was always money,—plenty it, pouring in, and he was satisfied his partner knew more abo the real estate business than he did. After the earthquake a fire, adjusting insurance losses had occupied his entire tim Wilbur had managed the other part of the business. Philip kne that his partner enjoyed having a free hand, though they h

never reached the point of discussing it. In his easy-going way he had made no effort to resume his old active interest, and Wilbur, always anxious to astonish him with his shrewdness and ability, had fallen more and more into the habit of confiding little to Philip about his operations in order not to spoil the effect when they were successfully consummated.

But left, now, to run the business by himself, Philip was staggered to discover its proportions, and to learn of the appalling obligations in which his partner had involved them.

The Bragg-Forsythe Company, a new and enterprising real estate concern, had obtained an option on the P. G. Douglas estate near Ingleside on the outskirts of San Francisco. The tract consisted of twelve square city blocks, and the work of grading, paving, and curbing the streets, laying sidewalks and digging sewers, had been going on for several months. The land was to be divided up into one hundred and fifteen lots, to be sold at approximately fourteen hundred dollars each. A grand opening day in the spring was planned. Wilbur had undertaken to finance the Bragg-Forsythe Company while they had engaged to do the actual work. He had agreed to pay over to them eight thousand dollars a month.

The Henderson Ranch in Yolo County comprised five thousand acres. Philip had known about this transaction before he left on his honeymoon. It was a big undertaking, but promised a golden return. Baldwin & Lansing had purchased the ranch as a speculation, negotiating a mortgage that called for eighteen hundred dollars monthly in interest. To take care of this expense, Wilbur had arranged to plant part of the land to alfalfa, and had contracted for checking and leveling the ground at thirty dollars an acre. The second payment for this work was now about due.

In addition to these undertakings there was the development of a sub-division of the city of Stockton, where the grading and leveling of streets had already been done. The proposition had been a failure handled by a local concern. Foreseeing a possible big profit, Wilbur had taken the burden of the enterprise upon his shoulders, and to help sell the lots had begun the construction of several small houses. The first payment on these dwell-

ings had been met, but the second and third were now owi
Philip was at his wits' ends to know where to lay his hands
the money.

He was not—had never been,—a successful borrower.
had none of Wilbur's talent in persuading people to do what
wanted. He was able to negotiate one or two insignificant lo
from the banks with which their firm did business, and th
taking his courage in both hands, he went to see the new pr
dent of the Market Street Bank.

The men greeted one another with every semblance of frie
ship, but each was conscious of a missing sincerity in the othe
warmth. There was no mention either of Constance or M
jorie, but Trevor commented upon the fact that Philip h
entered Paul in a military boarding school.

"I think it will be an excellent place for him," the bank
said, fitting his finger-tips neatly together in judicial fashi
"He needs the companionship of other boys; it ought to devel
him."

"I hope so," Philip agreed. "I'm anxious to do somethi
for him."

"Best thing in the world for him. Fine; bring him o
Those setting-up exercises are splendid for growing boys."

Trevor consented to accept his erstwhile brother-in-law's no
for thirty thousand dollars, payable in ninety days. Philip w
surprised at his willingness to accommodate him.

"Why, certainly—of course—surely, Phil. Glad to do a
little thing I can for you. Delighted to oblige you. I'll ask M
Ryder to fix you up. He's our Trust Officer, takes care of su
matters."

Philip thought cynically after the interview was over, th
Trevor had been so agreeable in order to win his approval, a
shut his mouth in case he was inclined to talk. He suspect
the man rested uneasy in regard to his wife. It would be rath
embarrassing for Mr. Stanley Trevor of the Market Street Ba
to explain why Mrs. Stanley Trevor was behind a counter
the *Emporium,* earning twelve dollars a week. It was probab
that Philip alone knew the circumstances, and therefore it doub
less appeared discreet to grant Mr. Baldwin his "little favo

ocketing the check, Philip left the bank, conscious of contempt
r both himself and Trevor. He chafed under the necessity
hich had driven him to accept the man's assistance.

But as the days succeeded one another, and fresh complica-
ons beset him, he realized more and more he was in no position
question any source from which he got help. There began
owly to grow upon him a disquieting suspicion of his own
ental limitations. He commenced to fear he lacked the spirit,
e shrewdness, the ability to carry Wilbur's schemes on to
ccess. He grew nettled, then dumbfounded, at his own dull-
ss. He found he could not concentrate, could not grasp the
sential significance of facts presented to him. Men called upon
m to advise, or seek advice, to press their claims, or explain an
nexpected contingency that had arisen. Philip would listen
tentively, following word by word, but the point at issue
ould escape him. He tried desperately to understand, asked
ese men again and again to repeat what they had said, or to
plain a little more fully. But when they had complied a third
fourth time with this request, and he was still unenlightened,
was too much ashamed to press them further, and hid his
tuseness behind his old manner of thoughtful deliberation,
nting his dissatisfaction with himself and them in fault-finding,
in harsh criticisms of his employees.

"To get out,—just to get *out*," he said in a half whisper,
tween his teeth, sitting alone in his office and staring blindly at
large blue-print of the Stockton development fastened on the
ll.

He stormed at the absent Wilbur a dozen times a day.

"Confound him!—He got me into this mess, and then cut and
n. . . . *I* don't know what to do! . . . Why couldn't he have
t an address so I could have cabled him and had his
vice. . . ."

He groaned helplessly.

"My *God!*—if I ever get out of this, I'm *through*. I'll quit;
be satisfied with what I've got; I'll never take another
ance!"

In the midst of his worries, he received an urgent request from

Lucy in Honolulu for additional funds. He took a keen satisf tion in cabling her in reply he did not have them.

"Beckie can help her out," he told himself, grimly.

He borrowed every dollar possible on his own realty holdi and even sold some at a sacrifice. It was clear enough to that if, by hook or crook, he could either meet his obligations stave off his creditors until the Bragg-Forsythe people comple their work on the Douglas development and began to sell the l he could pull out with safety, probably with handsome profit.

In March, the Bank of Italy called Wilbur's note for twenty-seven thousand dollars loaned him on the Berkeley Ap ments, and politely but firmly refused to renew it, since rumor had begun to go about that Wilbur had "skipped." I perate, Philip hypothecated the S.P. stock his partner had l in his safe deposit box. As the building was Lucy's, he did hesitate to use any available funds belonging to her, to avert its l

But the circumstance that the Bank of Italy had declined extend the loan became bruited about in banking circles, a when the ninety days were up on the note held by the Mar Street Bank, Trevor asked for some security before renewing Philip was compelled to turn to Leila; he asked for a mortg on the Vale homestead. In three weeks at the outside, the Do las property would be thrown open to the public; he assured that if he could tide over that interval, he was safe.

The alarm and agitation with which his wife received request took him completely by surprise. Concerned only w the immediate need confronting him, he had not stopped to c sider how she might accept the news of his financial difficulti

"Just what do you mean, Phil?" she demanded with anxio frowning eyes. "I don't think I understand. The busine You mean Baldwin & Lansing?"

He tried to explain, but her increasing agitation would permit her to listen. She kept interrupting him.

"But I can't believe it! How do you mean 'ruin'? . . . You just fooling, of course. You can't be in *danger!* Why the bu ness—Wilbur left everything—you told me yourself he said y were going to make half-a-million!"

"I know—I know. That's all right. We have a chance . . . t's just a question of three weeks."

"What's the trouble? What have you gone and done? Is it question of investments? Mismanagement? Tell me the *truth!*"

With difficulty he calmed her and explained the Bragg-Forsythe scheme with careful diagrams and figures. He went ver these again and again. It was merely a question of three eeks, he kept reminding her.

"There's nothing else for it, Leila. If you don't help me out, have got to meet that note,—and I *can't*. Just get that through our head: I haven't the money to meet Trevor's demand; I've got o have some security to give him. If you don't help me out,—we o bust,—and that's all there is to it."

Leila stared at him, lips trembling.

"You oughtn't to agitate me this way," she said, knotting her ngers. "You know what the doctor said. He *told* you I should e spared excitement. You oughtn't to do it,—you oughtn't to o it."

"Well, my Lord!" Philip exclaimed roughly. "Is this situation my choosing? Did I get us into this mess?. . . If you hadn't een so free with your advice to Lucy about not granting Wilbur divorce, he wouldn't have been forced to get out, and leave me is way! . . . I'm doing all I can; I'm trying my best to avert nkruptcy. . . ."

"Don't—don't!" Leila cried out in horror. "It can't be as d as that. I had no idea—I didn't *dream* you were in so deep. ou told me there would be no deposit for me this month and to the bills run, and I haven't paid out a cent since January. ut *this!* . . . Oh, I can't believe it! . . . What shall we do! . . . hat shall we do! . . ."

In the end he persuaded her, and he mortgaged the Vale operty for as much as it would carry. The deed from Wilbur Lucy for the Lansings' home on Washington Street had never en recorded, and using his power-of-attorney, he placed a heavy an upon it, as well. He met Trevor's requirements, and used the all balance of what remained in meeting his pay-roll which as a month in arrears.

And then it began to rain and for a solid fortnight the water

streamed out of the heavens in a steady downpour. No w could be done on the Douglas tract; it was out of the question attempt to sell lots in such weather.

A dressmaker of his wife's precipitated the final smash. L had put her off several times, and on the last occasion, when woman had insisted upon getting her money, Leila had flo into one of her quick rages and ordered her out of the ho A collector called at Philip's office but was turned away, unsa fied, and then one day, early in May, a little oily Jew law appeared. He had a list of Philip's local debts, and suav offered the alternative of paying his client's account immediat or making an assignment for the benefit of creditors.

Philip scanned the typewritten list of his unpaid accou among tradespeople and merchants of the city and his e rested dully on the total: $3,165.82. He had less than a hund dollars in the bank. He obtained a day's grace. It occurred him he might appeal to Harry or to his mother to help him o It could be for only a few days more.

But swiftly following the departure of the little Jew ca Gus Crowley, of Crowley and Atkins, the contractors who h done the work on the Henderson ranch. Gus wanted his mon he was sorry but he couldn't accept Philip's note; he was ha pressed for cash himself; he declined to wait even ten days.

Philip sent for Termini, and for the rest of the day and i into the night he sat with the attorney, figuring and calculati in the blaze of white light that poured down upon the litter desk from the conical reflector above their bowed heads. Th was no stemming the tide; it rose up threateningly, menacing from every quarter. Philip realized, almost with relief, he h reached the end. The following day, Termini, in his beha filed a voluntary petition in bankruptcy.

§ 5.

Leila flew into a passion when she heard the news. He w mentally too weary to mitigate the facts. He came home a told her bluntly. He had failed, the business had gone to pot, was broke, there were only a few dollars in the bank, that was

he heard him with staring eyes; she would not believe him. hen when the truth came, she was swept by furious anger. ⁄ith no control of her tongue, she called him anything that ame to her lips: he was disgustingly fat, he was incompetent, upid, a loafer, a pig and a fool. Her opprobrium did not stir im. He had hoped for some word of sympathy, for he was xhausted and wanted kindness. What she said of him might be eserved, but she angered him when she accused him of mis-epresentation, of tricking her into mortgaging her home. But at, too, he let pass. He was in no mood to argue.

". . . You tricked me into marrying you. You gave me to nderstand you were rich. . . . I can't go back to skimping and akeshifts! . . . What's to become of me? What's to become f me?"

She strode heavily about the room, beating her fists together, oaning and bursting out every few minutes with fresh obraiding.

"Oh, get tired," he mumbled irritably.

"Get tired? Get tired?" she screamed at him. Some books oon the table were beneath her hand, and she struck them uriously to the floor. Her face, flaming with excitement, turned rkly red with the heat of her anger. She stood trembling, gging her nails into her palms, choking with emotion. Sud-nly a tempest of tears engulfed her. Tottering she dropped oon a couch near by, sobbing and weeping, shaking her head om side to side, her hands clutching her face. Then suddenly e turned toward her husband, features distorted with terror, r hands pressed hard against her abdomen.

"Quick—quick," she called helplessly. "The doctor—get him. uick—telephone. O—oh, my God!"

The baby,—a little girl,—was born an hour later, two months rematurely.

§ 6.

For the next few days Philip wandered about in a dazed ate of mind. He could not realize that as far as he was con-rned Baldwin & Lansing had ceased to exist. He did not know

what to do with himself. Leila had nothing to say to him, t trained nurse had charge of the new baby, there seemed to be place for him in his own house or in the world. In all his fina cial worries to keep the business alive, it had never rea occurred to him that bankruptcy would mean money shorta for himself. He had not realized that even under the lash of l wife's recriminations. Now Burns, the cook, the housemaid, t gardener, were inquiring whether or not they were to contin in his employ, or file claims for unpaid wages with the rest his creditors, and seek other positions. He let them all go, a wondered what he should do. Leila's friends trooped into t house to see her and the baby, and to observe how she took h misfortunes, while the trained nurse informed Philip she wou be obliged to give up the case if she had to answer the fro door.

From the wreck of his affairs he determined to try to ho on to the insurance end of them, and establish himself as a independent broker. He had built up a considerable cliente among personal and business acquaintances, and hoped he cou persuade his old customers to let him still handle their insuranc He called personally upon as many as he was able. He wa warmed by the kindliness with which he was received. General well liked in business circles, everyone seemed willing and anxiou to help him get on his feet again; even the underwriters to who for ten years he had been sending his insurance, showed a willin ness to assist him. One company even advanced him a fe hundred dollars.

He rented desk space in the offices of a small real esta concern on Montgomery Street,—a little dusty corner at the bac part of the ground floor,—and there he established himself. H had a small brass sign fastened to the back of his desk, facin the office. It read: *P. Baldwin—Insurance—Notary Public.* H arranged to pay something every month to the stenograph employed there, to take care of his meagre correspondence.

§ 7.

He was encouraged by his prospects and he hoped news of them might cheer his wife. Leila's confinement had been an easy one,—the baby was a tiny thing.—and in three or four days the new mother was sitting up. But Leila would have nothing to say to him. When Philip came to her room in the early mornings and in the evenings, to find out how she was getting on, she treated him gloomily, resentfully. What words they exchanged were about how she felt, the baby's looks and appetite, the trained nurse's idiosyncrasies, but nothing was said of themselves or of the future.

A frank discussion of what they would have to do might be postponed, but it could not be indefinitely avoided. Philip was eager to be on friendly terms with his wife again, to get adjusted to a new order of existence as quickly as possible. There was no use in Leila's bucking and grumbling forever about the matter, he told himself. They were "broke," they would have to alter their style of living, and the quicker they set about it, the better it would be for them. He was a long way from guessing what was passing in his wife's mind.

For days, and during dark sleepless hours at night, she had furiously rebelled at the prospect lying before her. She fought desperately for an escape from the walled prison which suddenly had reared itself about her. All her life she had schemed for a marriage of affluence, a marriage that would give her the financial and social security she craved. Lucy, Wilbur,—everybody, had told her Philip was worth three or four hundred thousand dollars. It was not as much as she wanted, but it was enough,—and she had realized the years were narrowing down her chances for the kind of alliance she would have considered ideal. She had talked to Philip about his resources, and they had seemed to her sufficient. On their travels he had provided for her liberally; there had been no stint of money, and she had put her fears forever behind her. The few months of easy entertaining she had enjoyed upon their return had been all she desired. She considered herself perfectly satisfied.

And now to go back to self-denial and penury,—to begin a over again, to know once more the pinching and patching, th dreadful familiarity of poverty! More than all, the thought o being again a social parasite, a hanger-on, a gatherer-of-crumb from society's table, was intolerable! She could not,—she woul not go back to it!

Her baby had brought another complication. Mother lov stirred within her from the moment the golden-headed little gir was laid in her arms, and when, after the third day, the uncertai little lips had found their way to her bursting breast, and she ha felt their tug and strain upon her store of life-giving nourishment her love had flamed into fierce tenderness and yearning. The inten sity of her affection surprised her; she had not foreseen it; her men tal attitude was upset, the old hankering for social preference los some of its allurement. Pride asserted itself; she would not b patronized nor pitied.

She wanted to run away, to hide. If there was no loop-hole o escape, if she must face the fact that she was a poor man' wife,—and she bitterly realized how well she deserved that fat after all her scheming!—she wanted to tuck herself and her bab into some obscure corner where no one could humiliate her. Sh could not bear the thought of Lily Short's elevated brow an light smile. She was glad that even Beckie was not at hand t advise and condole with her.

These fits of rebellion gave place to moods of indifference, an still again to moments of hatred of her husband. He was th one to blame for all their misfortune, he had shown he had no the gumption to carry on Wilbur's plans single-handed, he ha made a hopeless mess of things. It was his duty, his responsi bility to provide for them; he could do all the worrying himself

When Philip found the courage to give her some idea of th progress he had made toward getting on his feet again, she wa secretly surprised, though she gave him no hint of it.

"You see, Leila," he pressed on eagerly, "it's only going t be for a little while. I'll work up my insurance and graduall get more and more of it. Insurance is like a snow-ball: it get bigger and bigger as you go along. I'll be making a pile agai soon,—you see if I don't——"

She listened stonily, studying him. In her heart she was king herself: Was there a chance to win back? Did he have in him to give her again the financial security, the ease and omfort she must have?

"I thought we might rent this house," he suggested tentatively.

She made no comment and he went on, encouraged by her lence.

"It ought to rent for a couple of hundred a month, easily."

He sketched an outline of his plans. His premiums would ot amount to much at first; they would have to begin in a small ay,—a little flat or a bungalow across the bay——

Leila threw up her hand with a gesture of distaste.

"Well, it can't be very elaborate to begin with," he argued. There's sixty dollars that's got to be paid out every month,—and we don't rent the house . . ."

A puzzled frown darkened her face.

"The interest on the mortgage," he explained.

She had forgotten the mortgage. She swallowed hard and ew a long, tired sigh. The tiny hope shrivelled and died. She iffed bitterly, and reached for a cigarette.

§ 8.

When the maternity nurse departed, she took herself and her by to a hotel where she maintained herself with money derived om the sale to a local dressmaker of her more elaborate frocks d other things she had brought from Paris. Philip placed the l Vale homestead in the hands of several renting agencies, and ged his wife to look around for a place to live, but she had no art for such a quest. She could not leave the baby, and on e one or two brief expeditions when she took her small daughter ng, she found nothing at the rent they could now afford that en remotely satisfied her. Remembering how comfortable and nomical had been the little cabin under the acacia and pepper es where he had lived so happily with Mrs. G., Philip suggested rkeley, but Leila grimaced at this with affected horror.

"Oh heavens!—not the country! I couldn't stand *that*. Whatr we do, let's not be suburbanites,—commuters! If we're

going to be poor, let's be poor, and be done with it. I don't want any compromises, and I don't want to be crossing the bay some day, and run into Lily Short on her way to a luncheon at the Claremont Country Club. . . . Let's go 'way, where people can't find us. How about the Mission? Couldn't we find some kind of a habitable place out there?"

A vision of a dingy flat, with cheap furniture, the smell of greasy soup simmering on the stove, and a crying baby, swiftly rose before her, and she shuddered with quick revulsion, shutting her eyes tightly, sucking in a sharp breath.

"I hate it,—I *loathe* it," she cried miserably.

Philip scowled unhappily, clasping his fingers in a tight grip.

"I know,—I know," he agreed dejectedly. "Why don't you run up to the ranch for a few weeks, until I get a little ahead? They'd be crazy to have you."

Objections rose at once to Leila's lips. She was inclined to oppose anything he said these days. But before she spoke, she caught herself, and seriously considered the suggestion. Living in a small, cheerless hotel bedroom, cooped up in its restricted space with her fretting baby, had become almost unendurable. Her trunks, half unpacked and spilling over, hemmed her about, hampering every movement; she was obliged daily to wash out the baby's laundry in the bathroom; the diapers, drying on the radiators, filled the room with a stifling odor. She could get away from all this by going to Vacaville,—there would always be someone at the ranch to help her with the baby,—there would be no one to spy upon her, to rejoice in her ill-fortune.

"We—ll,—perhaps,—I don't know," she admitted reluctantly, "that might be a very good idea."

§ 9.

She went up to Vacaville and stayed two months. Philip busied himself with his affairs, rounding up his old customers, seeking new ones, trying to get his real estate friends to rent the Vale mansion for him.

Leila had mentioned the Mission,—an unfashionable, crude and graceless part of the city,—as a section in which they might

find a home where they could live cheaply, and be forgotten by their friends. The flat the Jones family had occupied was located in the Mission, and one day Philip visited the old neighborhood, and looked up at the building where he and Marjorie had been married, and had lived for the first happy months of their ill-fated union. The familiar locality was haunted with memories, some gay, some sad, all poignant. New shops filled the street, and, although this section of the city had not been reached by the flames, the fire and earthquake had brought about many changes; commerce of a cheap and tawdry order had intruded, elbowing its way in among the older shabby dwellings. He wandered further on, toward the old railroad station at Twenty-sixth and Valencia Street, past which only heavy freight trains lumbered now, since the "cut-off" had been opened up. He was interested in the "To Let" signs pasted upon the front windows of empty flats, and occasionally asked for the keys to investigate dirty, ill-smelling rooms. Late in the afternoon, near San José Avenue, he came upon a little six-room house waiting for a tenant. The fat German grocer on the corner, from whom he got the key, informed him the owner had only recently remodelled it, and Philip found it bright with new paint and paper. Its attractiveness was enhanced by a small garden that had been some former tenant's labor of love. There was a white picket fence along the wall that edged the sidewalk, a little swing-gate, and in the garden, a narrow path of old chipped bricks, bordered with mignonette and languishing beds of violets and pansies. Against the house crowded unkempt bushes of marguerites, rusty geraniums, and thick masses of brilliant-leaved nasturtiums, with yellow blooms peeping partly through the flat, green foliage. In the tiny back yard was a weedy patch of grass, and a straggling, half-dead apple tree. Philip, viewing it, saw it an ideal and safe spot for a rompered baby.

The house was small,—there were only two square, little bedrooms upstairs,—but the cherry-colored wood, made brave with paint, the clean floors, the bright new electric fixtures, the gay, fresh paper won his heart. The neighborhood might have been more cheerful, perhaps. There was an abandoned shoe factory across the street, with dilapidated boarded and cob-webbed

windows; dingy, ugly flats hugged the little house on one side, and were balanced on the other by a row of shabby cottages. From the corner grocery fumes of stale beer occasionally were wafted.

But the unloveliness of the setting did not outweigh to Philip the neatness, quaintness, and cleanliness of his small discovery, of which he sent a glowing description to Leila, and waited impatiently for her decision. She wrote indifferently; it sounded attractive and the rent was certainly low; if he thought it would suit, he had better take it; it was terribly hot in the country, the baby fretted at night with the heat, and she'd be glad to get back to the city. He hastened to pay the first month's rent, arranged to have the front bedroom carpeted, and selected some of the smaller pieces of furniture in the Vale house to be moved over to the new home. He wanted to have it all ready for Leila when she came down, but he failed pitiably. As she passed from room to room, ascended the narrow bare stairs, glanced into the two little bedrooms crowded with heavy furniture awkwardly placed, inspected the stoveless, half-lighted kitchen with its dark green-painted walls, gazed at the sordid neighborhood through the curtainless windows smeared with paint and the marks of workmen's fingers, he saw its ugliness, its rawness and its meanness through her eyes. The baby, left for a moment upon her back in the middle of the empty dining-room floor to be out of harm's way, began to wail. Philip stared at his small daughter unheeding, swallowing his hurt and disappointment.

"Soon as the big house rents," he said gloomily, scowling at the whimpering child, "we can get something better. . . . It's only for a little while, Leila;—just till I get going again."

His wife turned from her resentful inspection of the dreary street, a biting comment on her lips. But something in the broad back and bent shoulders of her husband stopped her. Suddenly she felt sorry for him;—he was so helpless, so clumsy, so ridiculously pathetic. She came toward him, and slipped her hand beneath his elbow.

"Oh, cheer up, Phil," she said with affected brightness, "it isn't so *bad*. We'll—we'll be very comfortable here. I said I wanted a place to hide, and certainly nobody will ever find us out here."

She patted his arm reassuringly, and smiled up at him.

"It's only until I get going again," he repeated eagerly. "I'll get a lot of business lined up,—we can save and get out of debt, and then we'll move back to the Jackson Street house, and—and you can do all the entertaining you want!"

They kissed each other affectionately, while the baby at their feet whimpered.

§ 10.

Lucy and Beckie found them thoroughly established upon their return from Honolulu, and it was in the bare, rather cheerless little parlor that Philip went over the painful circumstances of Baldwin & Lansing's failure for the final enlightenment of his sister. He had written her, but the letters had not been sufficiently explicit. She had been frantic with worry, hadn't been able to secure passage, and she and Beckie had been obliged to remain there in the Islands, wondering and wondering what had happened. She wanted Philip to tell her just where she stood financially.

She had no particular cause to worry, he explained. Her plight was in no wise so serious as his own and Leila's. While her home had been mortgaged, the rents from the Berkeley Apartments insured her an income of two or three hundred dollars a month. But this announcement appeared calamitous to poor Lucy. She wept copiously, asserting over and over again she did not know how she was going to manage. Philip experienced a vague irritation; Leila sniffed in audible impatience; Beckie told her to blow her nose, and stop being a fool.

"I guess I'll go up to the ranch," Lucy declared tearfully. "I'll go and bury myself in the country until I can pay Beckie back all I owe her. . . . Ma will be glad to have me, and I suppose Harry can take care of me for awhile. . . . To have my husband desert me,—go off with a married woman,—and then to lose everything! I declare, it's—it's too much! It isn't *right;* it isn't *fair!* I'd like to know what I've done to be treated like that!"

"You'd do better to stay in town and rent your house," sai Beckie, unfeelingly.

Lucy could not understand why Leila had decided to live ir such a queer part of the city. She continued to exclaim over it

"My *dear,* nobody will ever come here to see you. They never on earth be able to find you! And if they did—well, wha kind of a funny place is that across the street?"

Leila's thin nostrils widened slightly, a sign of annoyance with which Philip was thoroughly familiar.

"I'll be very happy indeed if no one *ever* comes to see me," she rejoined with a satisfied air that delighted her husband. "If they do, they can sniff the odor of *Ranier* that emanates from the rear of Braüser's Grocery, or they can sit in the front window and gaze out upon 'that funny place' which was once a shoe factory, but I'm sure you will be relieved to know,—my dear Lucy,—it has not been operated for a number of years. . . .

"Have you seen my baby?" she inquired, dropping her resentful tone, and laying her finger-tips amiably on Lucy's arm. "Oh come along with me. She's your namesake: Lucy Baldwin, Number Two. She's a darling if there ever was one. . . ."

§ 11.

It was close to a year after her birth that Philip's love for his small daughter came to him. While a tiny infant, he had been but mildly interested in her. She seemed to him just a baby, with little, if any, individuality. Babies were all alike to him; some were fatter, some were prettier, some cried more than others, but essentially they were babies,—nothing else. In the aggregate, he did not like them; they were uncanny, weird little creatures, always wet and unnaturally soft. He was ever in fear of injuring the tender spot on top of their heads or of letting them fall over backwards and hurting their spines. As for this particular baby, she belonged to Leila,—not in any especial way to himself. That was how he had felt about Paul; the boy had been Marjorie's, and later had been passed on to Constance. He never thought of him as his *son;* he had hardly spent an hour alone with the boy in his life.

The seed of love for his little daughter, destined to flourish luxuriously in his heart, was sown upon an occasion when he and Leila were on their way to visit Beckie at Burlingame. It was a Sunday, and the first all-day excursion they had attempted since the baby's coming. Philip was carrying his daughter to the train at the station. A slow-moving freight locomotive suddenly loosed a raucous blast. At the noise, sharp, thunderous, deafening, the small body in Philip's arms leaped in terror; the baby clutched his neck, and buried her head against his shoulder, trembling. Something within him rose instantly in answer to the appeal. He caught her little head with his free hand, and pressed it closer into the crook of his neck, holding her tightly until the offending uproar abruptly ceased. In that moment his love was born.

The baby resembled her namesake in an extraordinary way. She was a diminutive image of her aunt, although Philip was certain the baby was far prettier than his sister had been at that age. Memories of Lucy as a little girl came flooding back to him. He recalled her toddling about the ranch in his wake, begging for "pick-a-back" rides. A little older, it had been her delight to sit beside him on the high, jouncing seat of the big farm wagon when he drove into town. It had long been his custom to carry her up to bed when it came her bedtime, swiftly disrobing her, slipping her into her cotton night-drawers, which buttoned up the back with ugly glistening white buttons. When he had returned from his year at the State University, their devotion to one another had been like that of lovers. The memories brought a strange pang as he reminded himself that the same little girl he had so dearly loved was now Mrs. Wilbur Lansing, —pretty Mrs. Lansing,—clever Mrs. Lansing,—the Mrs. Lansing who entertained so charmingly. He thought of her rather critically now. He did not know what was wrong with her,—or with himself.

But in his small daughter the intense devotion he had known for his sister he found again, and found it with thrilling joy, realizing what she would some day grow to mean to him. The days began to hold a new interest for him; he grew light-hearted and was gay and genial once more.

The child supplied the bond of interest that drew her parents together; their love for her kept alive their sympathy for each other. Leila proved a devoted mother though an inexperienced and erratic one. She tried to be conscientious, systematic, but it came hard. For years and years she had resorted to makeshifts and compromises. It was the way she had managed to maintain herself. She never had had anyone except herself to consider, and consequently it had become habitual with her to let housekeeping details take care of themselves. Before she married, it had not mattered particularly whether or not she missed a meal, or even two, whether she breakfasted at eight or eleven, or substituted "tea" at five in the afternoon for her dinner.

But she passionately loved her little girl. She wanted to do everything and be everything possible for the child, and she tried to put into practise all the advice that Rosemary and the baby's grandmother had given her during the summer months. She read Holt and other standard books on the care and feeding of children. Philip had told her what trouble Paul had given Marjorie with his delicate digestion, and Leila was oppressed with the fear that her child might be similarly handicapped, especially as she had been unable to nurse her after the second month. She made friends with Mrs. Conboy whose backyard adjoined their own, and who had six children under ten. Mrs. Conboy's comfortable reassurances were a great help, although that buxom, hardy lady's easy-going methods with her own flock scandalized her neighbor, who struggled to stick to a schedule of regular hours.

If the baby began to fret and whimper at half-past five in the morning, Philip was for taking her into bed with him, and amusing her to the banishment of further sleep for both himself and his wife. They slept together now in the small house; the baby had the front room and the morning sun. But Leila would not hear of any such parental weakness. The baby's bottle was not due until seven, and the child must learn that it was useless to expect it a minute earlier. She would still her husband's petition with a sharp, definite word. She would go to the crib to turn the baby over, smoothing the hot, wet pillow, arranging the small tumbled quilts, but she would not pick the child up

despite the tearful supplications. Philip would lie in bed, distressed and unhappy, while his daughter voiced wail after wail of piteous entreaty.

His good-natured indulgence of the child never failed to irritate Leila. She was quick to snub him, quick to silence any word that interfered with her routine. The baby must have her bottle at seven, eleven, three, and so on, and she must not have it a minute sooner. She accurately prepared the formula herself, measuring milk, barley water and whey in an apothecary's glass. She made everything the child wore, even to her tiny shoes. Her husband was amazed at her cleverness with her needle.

"I made my own clothes for twenty years; I guess I ought to know how to sew," she said sourly in answer to his comment.

But while she watched over and slaved for her baby with tireless devotion, she was not nearly so conscientious in regard to other matters. She was untidy, even slovenly, about herself and her house, continually slighting small duties, and allowing attentions she owed her person and her home to slip by unheeded. She fell into the habit of allowing the cloth to remain on the dining-room table from meal to meal, neglecting to brush it, and the baby's spilled milk dried upon it, and crumbs grew stale and attracted flies. The breakfast dishes frequently stood over unwashed and piled in dirty confusion in the sink until noon or even night while she finished the little sacque she might be knitting. The rooms were rarely swept and the bed, even the baby's crib, invariably remained unmade until late in the afternoon. She smoked almost all the time, and it was an incongruous sight to see her pinning diapers upon the wires that stretched from stoop to apple-tree in the backyard, with a cigarette dangling from her lips, or wielding a dish-mop at the sink, her head on one side, her eyes half shut to avoid the curling smoke from the cigarette in her mouth.

Leila, the magnificent, washing dishes! Philip found it hard to reconcile himself to the sight, and he would have sympathized with her had she been at all philosophical; but she was ever in rebellion. Whenever she thought about her lot, she grew sour and worked herself into a rage; she would scold sometimes for an entire day, or become sullen and uncommunicative. But as the weeks and

months succeeded one another, her tantrums grew less frequent. Her old light-heartedness, her shrill gaiety, her garrulousness gave place to a kind of begrudging resignation and curtness. Life dragged her through a daily routine; habit closed in upon her like an enveloping mantle. The baby alone made it endurable.

§ 12.

Philip was aware that his wife had never been in love with him. He realized that fact before the first week of their honeymoon was over. He had believed himself in love with her until then. Everyone he knew had done a part in persuading him he was in love, and no one had been more effective in convincing him than Leila herself. The revelation that he had been deceived carried its unpleasant shock, but he did not grieve about it. Mrs G.'s death had left him intensely lonely; he hungered for the intimate companionship she had given him; he admired and liked Leila, and had turned to her confidently. He would have asked her to marry him even if she had not been anxious to have him.

He was neither introspective nor temperamental, and he was ready to accept whatever came his way good-naturedly; he never stopped to analyze his emotions. When he made the discovery that love had not entered into his marriage, he felt that if anyone had been at fault, it was himself. It did not occur to him to blame his sister nor Leila. He had a pretty fair realization of why she had married him, and considered that he had been equally material and self-seeking. It had seemed a mutually beneficial alliance, and after the first weeks of disillusionment had passed, he was prepared to let it go at that. Passion did not enter into their relationship. This had been the disappointment. It was all too gross, too calculated; there was too much arranging and palaver, and never a hint of romance. The memory of his honeymoon with Marjorie had returned to him persistently during the early weeks with Leila. There had been something clean, fine, intensely beautiful about his mating with his first wife. Both had been gloriously young; there had been nothing that offended. Leila had merely piqued him with her warm eyes, her fluttering lids, her sensitive, twitching mouth. He had healthily looked forward to satisfying this somnolent passion,

ut after they had been married he learned that these artifices ere only the semblance of desire. She did not love him; he did ot attract her. She submitted reluctantly to him, making a great uss with lace night dresses, perfumes and baths.

But in spite of everything he liked her. When she chose to xert herself, he liked her tremendously. She fascinated him; e admired her, thought her amazingly clever.

As the months of their marriage rounded themselves into a ear, he began dimly to perceive that she was infinitely more ever than he had ever suspected. She was sharper, shrewder, nd a lightning thinker compared to himself. She could dismiss subject with the briefest consideration while he was laboriously inking it out. She was constantly surprising him with the imbleness of her mental processes.

He was aware she managed him, though just how she did it, e was never quite sure. He would find himself circumvented, oo late to follow his own preferences if these happened to be pposed to hers. In his good-natured fashion, he followed the ne of least resistance, and let her do as she liked. If he asserted imself, it inevitably precipitated an ugly scene. Leila had an ncontrollable temper. He was afraid of her when she was angry. peculiarly vulgar streak would appear in her then. She shrieked nd swore at him like a fishwife, the habitual high color of her ace turning flaming red. He hated her in these rages, which ransformed her into something gross, common, intensely unlovely. Iore and more he allowed her to have her own way; she had ut to threaten one of these angry bursts, and he was ready o give in. Anything but that ugly sight,—anything but those gly words!

As she became inuréd to her restricted life and all its drudgery, e slipped unconsciously back into her old routine of pinching nd patching, but now it was her baby and not Society that ngrossed her. In spite of the rebellion that flamed forth every ow and then, life,—the daily round of her existence,—absorbed er. The baby's cold, a leaking hot-water boiler, a defective himney-flue, an overcharge in fat Gus Braüser's bill, a poor cut f meat the butcher had palmed off upon her, a bargain sale sheets and pillow-cases at the *Emporium*, a lucky insurance

deal Philip put through, and the unexpected commission, brou an interest to her days to which she could not be indiffere Her baby proved a constant delight, and even in her husba infatuation for the child, she found a degree of satisfaction. Th never grew tired of discussing their small daughter, and drawi each other's attention to some endearing quality.

§ 13.

Leila gave the baby her bath at five o'clock, and for t minutes there would be a general slopping and splashing a piping shrieks of protest. Philip usually arrived home at twen minutes past five, and for upwards of an hour he enjoyed wh were for him the halcyon moments of the day. He would tal possession of his small daughter then, and carry her upstai to the bedroom, while Leila, in the kitchen below, proceeded wi her preparations for dinner. Stripped of her clothing, the bal would sprawl upon the wide bed, and for a quarter-of-an-hour more Philip would drag her about on the counterpane by n bare feet to her esctatic and gurgling delight. Then while he w prone upon the bed himself she would proceed to crawl over hi investigating his eyes, nose and mouth with soft poking finge Philip's big body trembled with delight; waves of pleasure r through him. What stirred him most of all was when his daug ter, tired of holding up her head, let its weight drop upon him, h open wet mouth close against his cheek. She might remain s stretched out across him, for a long time, content and still, h gentle finger-tips moving with a fairy touch about his neck. H father would lie motionless in a transport of ecstasy, hardly dari to breathe, torn with an agony of yearning, his eyes wet wi emotion.

§ 14.

Leila was troubled with poor circulation. Her hands and fe were always cold, the lack of natural warmth in the latter causi her continued discomfort. When she got into bed at night s immediately placed her cold feet against Philip's legs. The

as something peculiarly repellent to him about his wife's feet. ney were unusually long and flat, and the toes spread out like the ıd of a half-furled fan; there was no arch to the instep and they oked unhealthy, tallow-hued, dead. The touch of them invarily sent a mild shudder through him; his flesh rebelled from the ntact. But he endured this nightly annoyance without protest. e could never quite bring himself to the point of telling her he und it distasteful.

Throughout the day, particularly as evening came on, the icy ldness in her feet became unbearable for her. She would stop the middle of her house-work, or put Lucy in her high-chair, ep out of her low shoes, and sit for a quarter-of-an-hour or nger with her feet propped against the open oven door in the tchen. She would rub her feet with salt, slap them and dip em in hot water, with small result. Massaging them stirred e sluggish blood, but as soon as the rubbing ceased, the deadly te of cold returned. Going about her household duties, she ould stamp her heels upon the floor, in the hope of quickening r blood. It was in her heels the cold settled, and Philip grew miliar with the thump of her feet in kitchen and hall, or on the floor of the rooms above. She fell into the habit of iking her heels whenever she moved. The sound was in the tle house from the time she got up in the morning until she ent to bed at night. She would murmur about her distress cessantly.

"Oh-h-h,—cold heels—oh—such miserable cold heels! . . . Cold els! . . . Cold heels!"

It got upon Philip's nerves. No matter what he happened to doing,—romping with the baby, reading his evening paper, or aving in the tiny, dingy bathroom,—upon his preoccupied sense ould intrude the thump—thump—thump of Leila's cold heels.

§ 15.

When they were first married both had observed a careful odesty. Leila had set the example and Philip had followed her ıd. In his relationships with Marjorie and Mrs. G., he had en quite unconcerned about his conduct, but Leila was different,

and he saw she cared about such matters. He had been anxi
to please her, but now the small house made the continued
servance of excessive consideration difficult, and a bother.
had never had any particular sympathy with her attitude ab
such inordinate modesty, and when he came home at night ti
after his dusty day downtown, it was too much to expect of hi
he felt, to make unnecessary efforts. He grew increasingly i
and indifferent to her sensibilities. She was much too "finicky
he decided. One night when he was undressing for bed he caug
a look of frank repulsion upon her face. He had stripped to t
waist and the upper part of his body was bare. He sensed
was his obesity that offended her. For a brief moment he c
sidered the matter, then shrugged his shoulders with impatien

He concluded he did not care what Leila thought of him phy
ically. As far as she herself was concerned he had his o
grievances. He was intimately familiar now with her thin strin
rope of straw-colored hair that hung scantily between her shoulde
after the supplementary false braids were removed, her saggi
breasts, the sloshing noises she made when she washed her tee
the faint, unpleasant odor that sometimes pervaded her, her fa
when she woke in the morning,—shiny, wet and creased wi
wrinkles,—a ghastly misshapen physiognomy,—and, in particul
her cold feet. She was ten years older than himself, and he h
come to a full knowledge, at last, of exactly what differenc
those ten years made. Often the sight or perhaps only the thoug
of her filled him with disgust. If he tolerated her, she had sm
reason to find fault with him.

CHAPTER VI.

§ 1.

Philip's affection for his daughter aroused in him a certain curiosity about his son. The new love had so enriched his life that he began to wonder if he had missed some similar experience in turning Paul, as a baby, over to Constance. Marjorie, of course, had forced him to do it; he hadn't had any particular say in the matter;—or had he?

Paul had now been in a military boarding school for nearly a year. Before his real estate business collapsed, Philip had paid his son's tuition for a year in advance, but now the second school term was drawing to a close, and the man found himself looking forward to the time when the boy was due to come home with a good deal of pleasure. It would be fun having Paul around the house, he pointed out to Leila; he would be handy to run errands and watch the baby. It would be no longer possible to send him away to school: in the fall he might enter the Public Grammar School in the neighborhood.

He sought Constance to explain matters. She impressed him as being dowdier, more forlorn than ever. Her black dress was rusty, the linen collar about her neck slightly soiled and rumpled, her hair untidy. The last remnant of her old sparkle had departed; she was dispirited, and listened to Philip's proposed disposition of his son with melancholy apathy.

"I guess he'd be just as happy with you as with me. I ain't been much of him lately. I'm just too dead beat to make the trip down there to the school on Sundays, and they don't let him come home often. He wouldn't like it where I live,—I know."

Philip was relieved. He had been afraid Constance might be sorry to have him take the boy.

Paul came home in June, and his father greeted him with g heartiness. He thought the neat uniform set his son off splend but after the severe braided coat and striped trousers were aside, he was frankly puzzled. There was something in Paul's and manner that he did not understand. The boy was sul suspicious, and had a sly, resentful look. The long nose w the knob at its end, the close-set eyes, gave him an expressi that was almost wicked. Philip explained to Leila this was inherited handicap, but his wife took an immediate dislike to Pa

"He's got a hang-dog look that no decent boy ought to have. don't like a boy that won't look you in the eye. He's sneaky, that's what's the trouble with him."

Philip hardly knew what to say. He had to admit the tru of Leila's assertions, and he was troubled. He had entertain great hopes for Paul, had fancied him growing up into a f companion, bringing a new interest to his wife and himself.

He questioned the boy about his school, but Paul was retice What had happened? What had they done to him? His s had always been queer, unhealthy, his digestion easily upset, a Constance had frequently mentioned his sensitiveness.

"Did you like your school, Paul?"

The boy scowled and dug his fists into his pockets.

"You don't want to go back?"

A quick, apprehensive look shot from the close-set eyes.

"Naw-w,—I don't want to go back!"

"Why not? . . . Why don't you want to go back?"

Silence.

"Well, I'm not going to send you back; only you must be good boy, and try to please your Aunt Leila, and be helpf about the house. And you must learn to love your little sister a take care of her. Next August you can enter the Horace Ma Grammar School; that's the same school your mother went to."

Philip failed to get any response from his son, in spite persistent friendly overtures. His methods might be clumsy but kept on trying. Leila refused to be interested. Paul hung arou the house, moody, silent, resentful of suggestion, constantly su picious. He had picked up bad habits at school. Philip argue with him, threatened to punish him, to no purpose. Leila open

displayed her aversion. Philip could not carry out his plan to send him up to the ranch for the summer. Rosemary had written urging him to send Paul to visit them; his small cousins were wild at the prospect. But Philip was obliged to consider young Sam and his brother; he remembered their boyish healthiness, their candor and innocence. No,—it would not do to send Paul among them,—not yet, at any rate.

He fisted his large hands, and looked at Paul's sullen little face, the evasive, watery expression in his eyes.

"By God,—it's a rotten shame!" he exclaimed aloud.

Paul winced in fear, dodging as from an expected blow.

Who was responsible? The school? Constance? . . . Whoever it was had a heavy score to settle, if there was such a thing as retribution. . . .

He appealed to his wife.

"You can help a lot, Leila,—if you want to," he urged earnestly.

She affected a shudder and drew back her head with a vigorous shake.

"He's not *my* child. I don't want the responsibility. . . . I've got enough to do to look after my own. . . . If you want him 'round the house, make him behave himself."

§ 2.

Philip took Paul to the *Orpheum*, and on various occasions to moving picture shows. He liked the movies himself. Frequently, after a hearty lunch at *Jules'* with some of his friends, he would slip up Market Street to see one, alone. But he failed to make Paul admit he liked the "pictures," or anything else. He was provokingly indifferent, accepted entertainments, ice-cream sodas and candy without a word, expressing neither appreciation nor gratitude. Philip found it difficult to keep up conversation with him. He soon ran out of subjects, for he was too slow-witted to think up themes that would interest the boy. He took him to the movies instead. Some day he might win his son's affection and confidence through constant association, if by no other way, and taking him off in the evenings kept him out of Leila's way. They fell into the habit of going to see the films almost every night.

§ 3.

One evening they stumbled into a cheap "Nickelodeon," in the neighborhood, where thrillers were usually in order. They found seats in the darkness, and as Philip settled back comfortably to enjoy the entertainment, he was startled to recognize Marjorie's face upon the screen. It was amazing to see his former wife, whom he had known so intimately, acting silently, unconsciously there before him. For a moment, it seemed to him that everyone in the darkened theatre must know of their relationship. But even the boy beside him was not aware he was watching his own mother. Marjorie had changed but slightly from Philip's girl bride. She had "bobbed" her hair again, and it gave her an astonishing air of frank innocence and youth. Philip was deeply moved. He remembered how fresh and lovely she had been, and how madly he had loved her. Had their rupture been her fault? Had she been altogether to blame? He forcibly reminded himself of how she had neglected her baby, the unconscious boy beside him, who had never known her. It struck him they both had acted selfishly, nursing grievances against each other, unmindful of the unvoiced rights of the child they had brought into the world. That was the unreconcilable part of divorce.

His mind wandered among curious possibilities as he walked soberly homeward, the unresponsive boy beside him. If he could go back, if he could find Marjorie, would it be possible for them to start over again, renew their pledge to one another, and make some amends to their child?

§ 4.

Leila was in a rage when they reached home. The baby was teething, and had been crying and fretting ever since they had left, the milk had soured, there had been no one to send for more. She abused them angrily, and Paul was sent flying to the grocery that kept open at that late hour in the evening. He returned in half an-hour, saying he could not find the place, and Leila let loose a volley of screaming words that terrified him and drove him to

whimpering tears. Philip resented the abuse. It was not Paul's fault; he had thought at the time the hurried directions were not understood. His remonstrance drew the fire of his wife's wrath upon his own head, and an ugly, violent scene followed, while Paul cried fearfully and the baby wailed. Eventually, Philip went for the milk himself.

For a long time he lay awake after they had gone to bed. His wife was soon asleep, breathing gutturally, which always disturbed him. His thoughts wandered back to Marjorie. He wondered what kind of a woman she had grown to be; he speculated upon the changes the years had brought her. Had North's desertion, had poverty and trouble, had hard work and discouragement made any difference? Would she perhaps marry again? He recalled the final scene between them, how she had come slouching into the room where he sat waiting for her, how pasty and pocket-eyed she seemed, how she had ignored him with frank contempt, and had infuriated him with pretended solicitude for the baby.

He laughed suddenly, aloud, and bitterly. Leila stirred and moaned in her sleep. The story of the moving picture recurred to him. It had been a crude melodramatic tale, in which there had been a dyed-in-the-wool villain and a dare-devil hero. Marjorie had played the part of a virtuous wife, and in one scene had fought the drunken villain's advances. The man had retaliated by stealing her child and the action of the story followed her efforts to regain the baby, assisted nobly by the hero. At the finish, she had, of course, been triumphantly successful, and at the end of the picture Marjorie was shown in a "close-up," bending with streaming eyes over her little one, and straining the baby to her breast. The words she was supposed to utter at this juncture were flashed upon the screen: "My baby! My baby!—My little one! You shall never leave your mother's arms again. Death—and death alone—shall separate us!"

§ 5.

Paul entered the Public School of the neighborhood in August, and he slept on a couch in the dining-room. His presence in the house annoyed Leila vastly. It meant cooking a separate breakfast

for him as well as preparing his lunch; it meant picking up hi clothes, making his bed, washing extra dishes. She considered sh had as much as she could do looking after her own child. Pau invariably left the small bathroom in confusion after he had finish washing; he used the baby's things; he was constantly underfoo With sly inquisitiveness he would watch Leila as she went abou her work, and if she suddenly focused her glance upon him, he a quickly averted his eyes. It exasperated her to have him study he so persistently.

When he made her angry, she did not hesitate to slap him. The first time Philip observed this, he protested, but Leila told hin sharply that if he did not like the way she treated his son, h could take him elsewhere. Thereafter Paul would watch his oppor tunity, after Philip had come home, and when they were alone together, he would come close to stand behind his chair, and say in a hoarse whisper:

"She hit me again to-day."

His father would make a pretense of trying to discover a cause for the punishment. He did not like Paul to think he disap proved of Leila's actions. The boy must learn to respect his step mother. But the thought of her striking the child made his heart heavy within him, and he could not keep his distress from showing in his face. Questioning his son as to what had happened never elicited further information from Paul. It did not seem to matter to him whether he had been at fault or not; he had been struck that was the point.

Philip hesitated to expostulate with Leila; he knew he would succeed only in rousing her resentment, and he feared it might increase her prejudice against his son. He was intensely sorry for Paul; he was not altogether without sympathy for Leila. The boy had many curiously repellent qualities: he was not cleanly he was unappreciative, silent, sly; he lied without hesitation.

A feud grew up between Philip's son and Philip's wife. When he was struck, Paul would retaliate by surreptitiously turning ou the gas in the stove where stew was simmering; he would ring the front door bell when Leila was lying down, or manage slyly to waken the baby; he would hide various articles Leila needed such as her scissors, the apothecary's measuring-glass, the can

opener, the hatchet, the baby's talcum powder; he even cut the buttons off her high walking shoes. It was some time before she discovered his trickery, and she then gave Philip the alternative of whipping the boy soundly or sending him to an institution. Gravely troubled, Philip took his son into the bedroom, reasoned with him as best he could, explained why he must punish him, and then strapped him in a manner he thought mild enough. The boy quailed at each blow; he grovelled and writhed upon the floor, shielding his face and head with his thin arms, yelping in terror. His father was filled with great contempt for his miserable lack of spirit.

But in the morning, Paul was gone. When Leila came downstairs at six o'clock to get breakfast, his bed was empty. Four dollars and a few cents from her purse were likewise missing. Philip telephoned at once to Constance, supposing the boy had gone to her, but she had seen nothing of him. She promised to let Philip know if he appeared or if she heard from him. At the end of two days, he notified the police. But there was no news of Paul.

§ 6.

In the spring Leila had a letter from Philip's sister, announcing her approaching marriage to Jasper John Fargo,—well-known as "Dollar" Fargo. He was the originator of a patent safety razor,—the Fargo Razor Factories covered five square blocks in the city of Cleveland,—and he was many times a millionaire. He was well past sixty and was a widower with a son older than Philip, had retired from active participation in the management of his business and now made his home in Los Angeles.

Leila laid down the letter and eyed her husband through narrowed lids, an ill-concealed, bitter smile across her mouth.

"So that's why she and Beckie decided to spend the winter at Santa Barbara and Coronado. They went angling for Mr. Fargo and Lucy landed him. . . . Well, she got what she went after; I suppose she's satisfied."

Philip frowned. The idea of his pretty sister married to an

old man gave him no particular pleasure, and his wife's sneering comment annoyed him.

"He's close to seventy," Leila went on; "she'll have to play nurse for a few years and then she'll be in clover for the rest of her life."

"Well, I daresay she likes him."

"I daresay she'd like a toad with ten million."

Philip scowled at his wife. She was getting altogether too bitter, he thought; Lucy wasn't that kind. He said so with feeling.

Leila sniffed and put her chin in the air.

"Your sister's a very clever young woman. I daresay she decided not to take any chances, and she might as well land a big fish as a little one. It's the wisest thing she could have done,—come to think of it," she added thoughtfully. "He wants something pretty and attractive around the house, I suppose. She'll make him just the kind of a wife he's after——"

"He is in love with *her,* isn't he? I think Lucy told me something about his pursuing and bothering her some years ago."

"Oh, he was infatuated with her; wanted to give her jewels and everything."

"Under the circumstances," Philip commented, "I should think she ought to have been willing to give Wilbur his freedom,—divorced him as he begged her to. If she'd done that, we wouldn't—the business wouldn't have gone to smash. Wilbur would have stayed here and married Flossie, and it would have been a whole lot better all round."

Leila elevated a corner of her mouth.

"I suppose she could not foresee with any degree of certainty an alliance with 'Dollar' Fargo," she said acidly. "If she had, I daresay she would have been more reasonable."

Philip remembered that his wife had advised his sister against a divorce. He did not altogether grasp the full significance of her last words, though he caught their sneering intonation.

"You're getting awfully damn mean, Leila."

"Oh, do you think so?" she asked with a pretended air of innocence. "I haven't any reason to be,—none that I know of!"

Philip kicked back his chair from the table where they had been

breakfasting, and rose impatiently. He studied his wife sourly, but no adequate retort occurring to him, he clapped on his hat and went out.

§ 7.

The Vale residence on Jackson Street had been rented for a year, but at the end of that time the tenants moved out and the house stood empty. Philip's insurance commissions often fell below a hundred dollars a month, and from this meagre income he was obliged to pay out sixty dollars in interest. He went to see some of his old-time friends in the real estate business, and asked them to interest themselves in renting the property. But summer was coming on and no one wanted the house at that season. He was obliged to appeal for help to Harry until a tenant could be found. In the fall his real estate friends thought the house would rent if the furniture were taken out of it. People willing to take so big a place generally had their own furniture. As Philip and his wife were hard pressed, they acted on this advice, turned some of the massive pieces over to an auctioneer, and put the rest in storage. But for some reason the house still would not rent. With difficulty, Philip met the first installment of taxes, but had to borrow from Harry when the second fell due. He finally received an offer of seventy-five dollars a month on a year's lease and persuaded Leila to accept it. This meant that while there would be practically no income from the house, there would be no further inroads upon his commissions, which he hoped would steadily increase.

But Philip had become somewhat lazy during his years of ease and plenty. He continued to grow fat, and had not the same energy to get about with his old tirelessness. He saw some of his insurance business slip away from him and he did not bestir himself to replace it. He enjoyed lunching every day at *Jules'* restaurant with a number of insurance brokers and real estate clerks whom he had known for a long time. There were about a dozen of these cronies and they all took great pleasure in these noon-day gatherings. They ate heartily; there were generally three courses and plenty of red and white wine. After lunch was over, they smoked one or two expensive cigars and shook dice to decide who should pay the check. Philip was astonishingly unlucky. He would be

stuck two or three times during the week, sometimes oftener. He opened an account with the restaurant, and at the end of the month wrote Harry to lend him the money. His bill at *Jules'* frequently ran over a hundred dollars. He made no mention of this to Leila, but told himself he ought to drop out of these lunches; he could not afford them, he ate too much, they consumed a great deal too much time. Often the merry circle did not break up until after three o'clock, and occasionally it was prolonged another hour while the men shot craps for two-bits a throw. They had a private dining-room, and the waiters left them to themselves. Many of them would not return to their offices again that day. Philip was usually among the last to leave. Eating so much made him sleepy and indolent; further business in the late afternoon seemed distasteful; nobody knew where he was; if anyone called up at his office, the telephone operator would merely say that Mr. Baldwin was out; he could always attend to whatever came up the following morning.

Each month, he resolved, would be his last at these mid-day feasts. He would settle his bill on the "first," and afterwards go to some other restaurant. He made several attempts to put this resolution into effect, but he found he sadly missed the genial fellowship. After he had eaten a solitary lunch, he would drift around to *Jules'* just to see what the "bunch" was doing. He would always be acclaimed with delight, and the next day would persuade himself that an occasional visit could be justified on the ground that it kept his seat among them. There were others who wanted to join the jovial group. He was not always going to be so hard-up; he'd put a big deal over some day,—like a hotel or an office building,—and that would fix him up right. Beside, he heard a lot of insurance gossip across the table, and this, he considered, was really essential to him in his business. On one excuse or another, he went back among them, until the throw of the dice went against him; then he would tell himself that one more remittance from Harry would not make any particular difference. He might as well postpone a definite break with the "bunch" and enjoy himself for the rest of that particular month.

When he returned to his office after one of these late lunches, he would occasionally be detained until after five o'clock, and this

kept him from getting home in time to play with the baby. Lucy vas growing into a radiant child with glorious fine-spun hair, that framed her fair little face in a bright aura of gold. She could talk and talk now, and her father was continually trying to fix in his memory the cute things she said and did, in order some day to mention them to an appreciative listener. But when the opportunity came, and he found his audience, his heart misgave him. He could never quite bring himself to the point of speaking about his baby girl. He would blush and stammer as the temptation came upon him, but he never yielded to it, and he kept her sayings and her smartness to himself. Some day, he thought, he would write them all down in a book; it would amuse her when she grew up.

As money became scarce and continued to grow more and more so, Leila developed a sullen mood. She considered Philip altogether responsible. When they had moved into the little house off San José Avenue, he had been full of assurances that they would only have to be there for a short time; just until he "got going again." But there was no prospect that they would ever be able to afford anything better. It was to be like this, for the rest of their lives! Her sister-in-law's bright prospects as Mrs. Jasper John Fargo with the income of millions to spend as she liked, rankled; Leila was consumed with envy; her own marriage had turned out to be a hideous misery. It was just this slaving and skimping, this everlasting toiling and self-denial, she had hated all her life. She had refused a man she might have really come to love, she had declined other offers of marriage in order to escape once and for all the drudgery of penury. Now she despised her husband. He was fat, lazy, good-for-nothing. He infuriated her with his good-nature, his maddening deliberation, his sluggish brain, his loud laughter. She surmised that he loitered about the offices of men he knew downtown, joking, swapping stories, passing the time of day, when he should be on the keen scent for new business. Philip shook all over when he laughed now. She could see his big body quaking with mirth, his jowl jiggling, as he leaned against some counter, and could hear his fat chuckle break into a loud guffaw.

She worked herself into helpless rages. Her mind dwelt upon leaving him some day,—some day, when she had got a little money

together. She could not do it yet; there was the child. It had been difficult to support herself before she was married; she could not do it with a little girl tagging at her skirts. Beside, she hated the thought of going back into her old circle, where lay the only chance of a livelihood, unless she went with money. She knew how she had run down; she knew how bedraggled she appeared. Her yellow hair was streaked with grey, there were patches of criss-cross wrinkles under her eyes, the shrivelled flesh upon her eyelids stuck together when she winked, her hands were cut, bruised, the nails broken, and they smelled continually of the sink. She was a drab, leading a drab's life, and she knew it.

The baby alone made it endurable. The child was a fairy with laughing eyes and dancing feet. She was the merriest kind of a companion, and Leila rarely let her out of her sight, though the little girl's gaiety found no echo in the mother. Sitting, corsetless, in a loose, spotted gingham dress on the steep, narrow back-steps that led down from the kitchen door, she would soberly watch little Lucy for hours at a time, as the child climbed the leafless apple-tree or dug holes in the neglected garden with a short coal shovel. She was not a demonstrative mother, but she loved her daughter passionately, making her clothes, working tirelessly through the empty hours of the day over linen frocks, dainty white dresses which she ironed deftly, while sweat dripped from her forehead and hissed on the hot iron in her hand.

She took little care of herself, and the garden, which she had once thought so pretty, was now a tangle of long grass and weeds. The violets, the pansies, the marguerites, were all dead; the yard was dusty and filled with brown, dry stalks. She never wore corsets except when going downtown, and when shopping she frequented the cheapest of stores to avoid meeting anyone she knew. In the mornings she twisted her scanty braid of tawny, graying hair around and around on top of her head and stuck a hairpin or two into it; she tied on a black petticoat over her ribbed underwear, and slipped on a gingham dress. This was her costume for the rest of the day. If she went across San José Avenue to the grocery on the corner, she pinned on a cloth hat and drew a cape over her shoulders, carrying home her bundles out of sight beneath its folds. She frequently did not lace her shoes, for she found it easier to step

ıt of them to warm her cold heels in the oven. Little by little r intimacy grew with Mrs. Conboy, and in the mornings they equently hooked arms across the back fence and murmured together r long stretches. But Leila would not permit Lucy to play with y of the Conboy children.

Whatever friendly relations Philip was able to enjoy with his fe came through the medium of their small daughter. The child as usually waiting for him when he got home, her little face ering through the dingy pickets of the fence that separated garden om sidewalk. It was his custom to bear her triumphantly upon s shoulder back to the house, stooping carefully under the frame the front-door so that her head might not bump, and carry her the wide bed upstairs where she would be ignominiously dumped, her laughing delight. Then followed a half-hour of rolling, lling and bouncing, her shrieks of pleasure alternating with his t chuckles. He never failed to bring her home something, if it as no more than a radish from the lunch table, stuck with four oken toothpicks to resemble a horse. The little girl had a row of ese shrivelled treasures in a wooden box underneath the wash-tubs the kitchen. She would play with them contentedly for hours, ile her mother thumped her iron or bent over her sewing, telling rself endless stories in a monotonous, lisping voice. They made a e "racing stable," her father had once told her, and while she d not in the least understand what he meant, she always thought them as a racing stable, and of him as the king who ruled over em.

In the mornings Philip, who now occupied the couch in the ning-room vacated by Paul, would be awakened by the patter of re feet on the stairs, and a small flying body would be suddenly tapulted into the middle of his abdomen. Sleepily he would tempt to protect himself from the shock; the quick drumming of tle feet gave him warning; but occasionally he was unprepared d the impact of his daughter wrenched from him a grunt of ony. But he had always a welcome for her, was instantly willing be broad enough awake to play and tumble her about as she ed.

On Sundays he took her with him to the Park and sat under e pollarded trees on the green benches, idly reading a Sunday

newspaper, listening to the band, while Lucy played at his fee made piles of loose pebbles. Later on, they would walk to Children's Play Ground, where he would push her back and f in a swing, give her a ride in a goat-cart, buy her a glass of m and then home.

Leila chose these afternoons to visit Beckie in her luxuri apartment on Nob Hill. Her cousin was troubled with gout a g deal, and had grown testy and complaining. She encouraged L to come in and make tea for her, and Leila went, not because enjoyed the task or because she liked Beckie, or the occasio encounter with old acquaintances, but because she returned ho with two or three extra dollars in her purse.

As she was about to take her leave, Beckie would say w embarrassed brusqueness:

"My purse is there somewhere on the bureau in my room. H yourself. I know you're hard up. . . . Don't know what's in but take what you find."

There never was more than three dollars,—perhaps only four five half dollars,—never any quarters or dimes. The purse's co tents had been carefully counted beforehand. Leila would ha herself as she pocketed the money, hate Beckie, hate her husba But she had come to depend on this weekly largess, pitiful as was.

She never wasted words nowadays on Philip. She set his fo before him on the kitchen table without comment. It was heap on a plate, and when it was licked clean, he knew better than ask for more. At infrequent intervals he handed her small han fuls of silver: seven dollars and a quarter, six dollars, three dolla and seventy-five cents. He gave her practically all his comm sions, keeping out a dollar or two for carfare and cigars. He sa nothing about the lunches. His brother, in ignorance of how t money went, continued to pay for them. Whatever hesitation Phil had once felt in asking Harry to help him, gradually disappear until he came to appeal to him at the end of each month, quite as matter of course.

"Dear Harry," he would write, "I've figured it out pretty ca fully, and I guess I can get along with a hundred and thirty ext

is month, so send it along if you can spare it. Yours affec. hilip."

The money never failed to arrive within a day or two with a ribbled note pinned to the check:

"Glad to help out. Hope things will perk up. Harry."

But they did not seem to. The Vale mansion fell vacant again, nd Leila would have gladly sold it to be rid of it, but real estate alues had fallen and continued to decline, so that it was doubtful , on a forced sale, the property would bring the price of the ortgage. Beckie was finally prevailed upon to pay the monthly terest, though she consented with extremely bad grace and much umbling.

The time came when Philip's little family was actually in ant. Old Gus Braüser, the German grocer, told Leila she had etter pay up before she charged any more; the butcher and the airyman followed suit; when a collector called for the rent, there as no money to give him.

Leila sold the furniture in storage, but when this was gone e was at the end of her resources. She had disposed of her welry long before. She gradually reached the conclusion Philip as not giving her a proper share of his commissions; he was olding out" on her. That explained why he was so fat, sleek d jovial; why he was always in such good spirits. She had t to look at herself in the mirror to see that she was growing inner and daily more haggard. She knew what it was to be ngry and have no food to satisfy the craving.

She faced him one evening when he came home, with the state- ent that there was nothing in the house for his dinner, and that less he brought her some money, he could expect nothing ore to eat in that house. Why didn't he appeal to his brother for loan? He frequently had helped Harry during the days of his osperity, and it was no more than right that Harry should ciprocate. Some curiously self-conscious look in Philip's face ld her she had touched upon the secret she had suspected. In flash she saw it all: Harry had been contributing regularly! hat was the source of the money he had kept from her! That

accounted for his well-fed plumpness, his maddening good-nat

Red spots danced before her eyes. She stood trembling. dark, crimson blood congesting her face, turning it purple. the moment Lucy, who had been playing in the back-yard and climbed the steps as she heard her father's voice, pushed o the battered screen door, and with an eager, little laugh, tro across the kitchen floor, and clasped him about the knees. L made a swift reach for the child and swept her into her arms

"Get out—get out—you dog—you swine," she suddenly screa at Philip. "Don't you come here again . . . Lucy and I manage without you, you scum! D'you hear? . . . the baby I can get along. . . . We don't need a hulking fat loafer you to take care of us. . . . Get out o' here,—d'you understa Get out o' here—get out—get out. . . ."

As Philip gropingly found the street door and swung it op he heard one more voice added to the din of his wife's fu

"Mama—mama! Daddy! . . . Oh, my daddy. . . . Oh, ma —my daddy!"

CHAPTER VII.

§ 1.

Vacaville on a sweet September day was verdantly radiant, ie air clean and filled with fragrance. The orchards were strewn ith fallen fruit; a carpet of deep purple spread itself beneath ie trees where the prunes lay thick; pickers bent to their work ently, industriously. Philip, lumbering along in a taxi from the llage, could hear the drumming impact of the fruit tumbling to the tin pails. Down in the lower stretches of the Valley, the unning was already in progress; meandering scarves of smoke rose ove the tree-tops from countless fires. The scent of burning ush and dry leaves came to him with the odor of pungent ense.

It warmed his heart to be so cordially welcomed by his mother d by Harry's family. The boys, just arrived from school, armed about him, shouting his name. Lucy was there, too, oking prettier than he had seen her for some time. She was sy with preparations for her wedding, which she told him ily was only a fortnight distant.

There was something amazingly heartening in the atmosphere Harry's home. Eight sat down to table at every meal, and ere was a constant babble of talk and laughter. Philip had ver seen his little old mother, her thin straight hair snow-white w, so thoroughly content and happy. She had a little cabin to rself, not far from the main house, and about it flourished a odel vegetable garden. Everything grew there from artichokes strawberries. Early and late she was pottering about the neat ws of vegetables, watering and snipping, working the earth with industrious trowel. She had a diminutive kitchen at the rear her small domain, and here she busily preserved fruit; there s a steadily increasing army of neatly labelled jars on the ole just inside the screened porch.

Philip found himself able for the first time to unbend be Harry's trio of boys. His small namesake was only a year two older than his own little daughter, and he drew upon supply of tricks and stories with which he had amused Lucy divert Rosemary's youngest. The older boys, he discovered to pleased surprise, were equally interested. His manufacture a "racing stable" proved a tremendous success, and soon th were herds of pigs, cows and horses encumbering the porch back-steps, the yard and lawn, as radishes, potatoes, cucumb were transformed into galloping quadrupeds. Sam's achieveme of a watermelon with stout legs from a broom handle, nail hea for eyes, and a real gaping red mouth was acknowledged by ever one a masterpiece.

It was always the custom to play games at the table whi the main course was being cleared away, and before the desse appeared. The boys eagerly waited for this time and Philip fou himself sharing their anticipation.

"I've got a word that rhymes with *stale*," Harry would a nounce.

"Is it what you lock up burglars in?" immediately wou demand breathless Hal.

"No, it is not *pail*."

"Is it what you carry milk in?" Lucy might venture.

"No, it is not *pail*."

"It is what ladies tie 'round their faces when the wind blow like everything?"

"No, it is not *veil*."

Philip would find himself busily going over in his mind: bal snail, sail, dale, frail. . . .

"Does it mean weak,—kind of puny?"

"No, it is not *frail*."

And so ale, fail, scale, rail, nail, quail, would be tried unt some lucky questioner would ask if it was a great big fish.

"Yes, it is *whale*," Harry would acknowledge with a smile.

There were other games. They played "You have a face," an "Hanging the fool" and "Buzz" and "Going to Paris." Phili became absorbed in these pleasant diversions. He could not thin so fast as the children, whose quickness astonished him, but h

llowed each game with amused, attentive interest. They lin-
red about the table often for the better part of an hour.
The food, too, was excellent. Philip told himself he had
rgotten what an unusually good cook his sister-in-law was. Her
stry was remarkably fine; he found he could eat half-a-dozen
her popovers at breakfast, and return for a second and some-
nes a third helping of pie at lunch or dinner. Her chicken
rry and rice, he declared, he could enjoy every night for a
nth. He was full of praise.
"It's a delight to have you in the house, Phil," Rosemary
id, pleased with his rhapsodies. "You're so appreciative. . . .
cook just twice as much of everything," she added, addressing
s sister, "when Phil's here; I never saw a man get more satis-
ction out of his food than he does. It just does me good to
e him eat."
The days were full of amusements, particularly Saturdays
d Sundays when, morning and afternoon, they all trooped over
Ralston's pool for a swim. Rosemary had built a grill in a
ung clump of redwoods, and frequently they broiled chops for
nch and ate out-of-doors.
"You know, Harry," Philip said to him one day in frank ad-
ration, "you lead the most ideal life of any man I know! It's
st wonderful to see you and Rosemary and the boys so happy.
. I wish to God there was something like it in *my* life. . . . "
"Well, Phil,—it hasn't come all of a sudden. We've had to
rk for all this. You remember what tough times we had when
first started out? It was just one set-back after another.
semary and I have had some pretty hard times."
"Yes, I know,—I know. . . . It's coming to you,—every bit
it."
Philip eyed the ground thoughtfully. He wondered how it had
ppened he had missed marrying Rosemary.
"I wish you could see my little daughter," he said irrelevantly.
"I hear she's grown into a lovely child. Lucy was telling us;
e must be a great joy."
There was a brief silence while Philip screwed his heel into
e ground and studied the effect.
"I must be getting back to the city," he announced presently.

"Couldn't you bring her and Leila up here for another vi
We enjoyed having them with us so much that summer; it w
do 'em a world of good, and we'd love to have them."

"Perhaps.—I don't know,—I don't know," Philip said vagu
"We'll see."

If it had only been the right woman! If he'd only started
right! Marjorie certainly had not been the right kind of a p
ner. . . . *Partner!* Philip deliberated upon the word. Yes, t
was what marriage was: a partnership. He reviewed the lives
his friends. There was not a man among them who had succee
in life who had not a fine woman beside him, nor a wife who h
become respected and beloved in her community who had not h
a good husband. Constance rose up to refute the conclusion, b
Philip refused to think she routed it. She had given her hu
band all she had, and he had climbed on the very strength of h
devotion. That she had not been able to keep step with him,
that Stanley Trevor had left her behind, choosing to run the rest
the race alone, had no bearing on the question. Yes, marriage w
a partnership. . . . But, if the partners were mismated . .
What then? Was the penalty deserved? . . . It was all a bli
gamble,—a grab-bag anyway.

§ 2.

It was the last day before Lucy's departure. She was goi
to be married in Los Angeles, and had prevailed upon her moth
to accompany her; "Dollar" Fargo was building a magnifice
home for her at Beverly Hills, and they were to live there on t
return from their honeymoon.

Lucy and Philip were alone at the breakfast table; the bo
had gone off to school; the others had disappeared. Lucy was loo
ing over her letters that Joe Requa had just brought in from t
gate. A gasp broke from her and she raised her blue eyes, alig
with interest, to her brother across the top of closely writt
pages in her hand.

"Phil!—Remember your friend, Mary Rowland? Well,
dear,—she's made a hit,—she's a *tremendous* success! This

from old Mrs. Tom Carmichael. I haven't heard from her in years, . . . listen to this: 'The tall, statuesque young lady, Mary Rowland, who used to live at the *Pleasanton Hotel,* and to whom your brother was once so devoted, has blossomed out into quite a songstress. The last I heard of her she was in a Carmelite convent. I met her mother in the street, as I believe I wrote you. Evidently the convent was too confining. I understand she got out before she finished her novitiate, and it is lucky she did, for she's captivated London. She came here from Dresden last year and sang at Albert Hall, and the critics all went crazy about her. She's "Marie Rolando" now. I nearly fainted when I saw her and recognized your brother's old flame. I hope he's found consolation. I enclose a programme of her last concert.'"

Lucy paused and stared at her brother.

"What do you know about *that?*" she asked, inelegantly.

Philip picked up the folded programme that had fallen from the letter and spread it out mechanically upon the table.

"She had a lovely voice," he remarked evenly as he read the advertisement.

Whatever emotion he had once felt for Mary Rowland had long since died within him. He only thought of her now with bitterness, not in connection with her, herself, but with the agency that had prevented their marriage: the Catholic Church. Leila was of the same faith, but plans for the wedding had been afoot before he became aware of the fact. He had supposed that his divorced state would again prove a barrier to his marriage with a Catholic, but the obstacle had been successfully circumvented. An obliging priest had found a way out of the difficulty. Had the first Mrs. Baldwin ever been baptized? Philip recalled that Mrs. Jones had been a great scoffer at all things pertaining to religion. He had gone to see Constance. No,—neither she nor her sister had ever been baptized. Father Walsh had been delighted to learn the news; it quite simplified matters. A dispensation was obtained without difficulty. The Church refused to recognize a marriage with an unbaptized person; in its opinion, Philip had never been married at all, and nothing stood in the way of his marrying Leila or any other true believer.

If he or Mary had only known! They had been needlessly

separated. Their broken troth, their tragic parting, the anguish of unsatisfied love, all had been unnecessary. Any other Father Walsh who had chosen to befriend them could have shown the way. A phantom barrier had separated them. All the years since his marriage Philip had imagined Mary locked up in a convent, renouncing him and the world under the false impression that an insurmountable obstruction stood in the way of their union. It had been too late to recede from his marriage with Leila; he had supposed Mary to be a nun by that time. And so it had been Leila—and not Mary—who had become his wife.

"You can thank your stars you never married *her*," Lucy declared, breaking in upon his thoughts. "She wasn't the least bit suited to you. She was much too high-brow. You couldn't have got along with her,—no one could, unless he'd been a poet or a musician. My goodness, Phil,—what do you know about Browning or Wagner? You hadn't a thing in common with her. Where would you be now,—married to a prima donna? . . . How are you and Leila getting along?"

Philip was suddenly minded to tell his sister of the last scene with his wife. He hated Leila now. He could only see her viciousness, her meanness, her ugly temper; it had been horrible, that last scene,—she was a harridan, a devil, a fiend. He had in no way warranted her turning on him in that fashion; he hadn't been unfair to her; he didn't make much money, but he had never failed to give her all his commissions with the exception of about five or six dollars a month he kept out just for cigars and carfare.

"Oh, Philip," gasped Lucy, "I'm so sorry—so *awfully* sorry!" She stared at him with distressed eyes.

"Well, what do you make of it?" Philip demanded with rising feeling. "Just because I can't give her enough money, she drives me out of my home, kicks me out of the house. She thinks she can take my little girl away from me! We'll see about that. . . . I'm not to blame. I'm doing the best I can.

"And what good would divorce do?" he went on gloomily. "I won't give the baby up; she's the only thing I care about; she's all I live for. Leila would never let me have her;—so there you are! . . . I don't know what to do," he finished brokenly.

"Oh, you'll just have to make it up with her, Phil. You've had awful bad luck, that's all."

"She's always hounding me and nagging me and finding fault," he continued passionately. "She hates me and, God knows, I hate her. There we are, two people shut up in a small house, hating each other. Is that any atmosphere to bring up a little girl like Lucy. What's going to be the effect on the child herself? Just think of it! It's terrible! . . . That sort of thing can't go on. I'll give her up first. No marriage is worth preserving under such circumstances. Divorce is a thousand times preferable. The child will learn to despise me the way her mother does!"

He shook his head miserably.

"I look at Harry and Rosemary and their three boys," he went on, "and I ask myself how it is he gets so much happiness out of life and nothing like that comes to me. My God! I've had one rotten deal after another. And I'm getting on, Lucy,—I'm past forty."

Lucy nodded her head in quick sympathy.

"Rosemary's a mighty fine woman," he remarked.

His sister turned to him with sudden bright interest.

"Phil! I've got an idea! Wait till after I'm married and I'll persuade Jasper to give you all his insurance. My *dear!*—he's got oodles of it, and he'll do anything I want. . . . Oh!" she exclaimed, patting the palms of her hands together excitedly, "I'm *so* glad I thought of it. It will amount to hundreds of thousands, Phil; almost everything he owns is in real estate down in Los Angeles. I'll ask him to place every cent of his insurance with you. He'll do it; see if he doesn't. . . . And he told me he is going to make me a very generous allowance every month, and if you don't mind, I'll send you a little check now and then. . . ."

Philip gazed at Lucy affectionately. He rose and came around to where she sat and kissed her.

"You're a very sweet little sister. You're awfully kind to offer to help me out, but I guess it isn't only the money that's the trouble. . . . I never want to live with Leila again."

§ 3.

It was the day after Lucy's and his mother's departure that Philip was sitting on the porch in a comfortable old wicker chair, watching the last of the afternoon's sunshine stealing its way through the ranks of the trees. The orchard floor was strewn here and there with yellow leaves, and there were piles of lopped branches stacked beneath the apricots that would soon feel the torch. From the bare hillside, behind the house, drifted the faint rank smell of spoiling fruit, where the last of the prunes were drying out in the sun. It was still, hazy, warm and beguiling.

He had postponed from day to day his return to the city, but now, as he sat enjoying the peace of the waning afternoon, he realized he must wait no longer. He did not care what happened to his wife, but he was troubled about his little girl. What had Leila done? He did not propose to give the child up; he would have to come to some sort of an understanding with her mother.

The sudden honk of a motor horn, Mutt's convulsive barking and the crunch of wheels on the crushed rock of the driveway broke in upon his brooding. A small car rumbled up to the steps and from under the low top peered forth the sunny red face of the Reverend Clement Gould. Philip had always liked the minister; he had called him "Padre" since his Sunday school days. He greeted him with a great show of affection.

"Well now, well now,—if it isn't Philip," said the old man, grasping both his arms and surveying him head and foot; "and how are you? and why don't you ever come and see an old man once in awhile?"

Philip started to explain, but the clergyman cut him short, sweeping away his words with a quick gesture.

"Save your breath, my boy. I know well enough the whys and wherefores! It's enough to catch a glimpse of you now and then . . . Where's your pretty sister!"

"She left with Ma for Los Angeles yesterday. She's going to be married next Wednesday."

"That's too bad;—it's a pity. I'm sorry to miss her," the old man said, shaking his white head. "I wanted to make my peace with her before she went, and wish her Godspeed."

"Why,—what was wrong, Padre? . . . Did she do something to displease you?"

"It's *I* that did the displeasing, my boy. She was as cross as two sticks with me because I'd not marry her. . . . I couldn't do it, twice, you know, Philip; not with her first husband still living."

Philip studied the minister's face, and his brows knit slowly in a troubled frown.

"Too bad you feel that way. I don't understand. . . . What's wrong with marrying her again? You ministers make marriage a terribly difficult proposition for the rest of us. . . . Sit down, Padre,—it's been too long since we've had a talk. I'd like to argue this thing out with you."

He gently pushed the minister into a chair and drew up another close by. The old man dropped gratefully into the proffered seat, his broad felt hat upon his knees.

"You know, Padre," Philip said, speaking carefully, "this marriage business,—it's all wrong; it's neither decent nor reasonable. A man and woman that are, or *think* they are, in love with one another, being at the moment swayed by the strongest but most changeable of emotions, stand up before one of you representatives of the Church, and solemnly take an oath to 'love, honor and cherish' one another until death do them part. It's not humanly possible; you can't *will* to like a thing for the rest of your life; you ask us right off at the very beginning of our marriages to swear a lie."

The clergyman smiled benevolently.

"My boy, like other careless, unthinking people in attacking the sacrament of marriage you speak only as a selfish individual. A bond dissoluble at will in the divorce court is not a foundation upon which civilized society can endure. It is essential that marriage should be permanent. To let men and women live together for a time, and then with legal sanction separate to form other alliances, is practically to abolish marriage and to substitute a system of legalized free love."

"What of it? Call it what you like: 'legalized free love' or 'marriage.' It is what exists all over this country to-day. I don't just remember what the proportion is. . . ."

"One divorce in every nine marriages," said a voice behi them. Rosemary stood in the doorway of the house. She can forward with a smiling welcome for the caller.

"Sit still,—sit still, Mr. Gould, don't get up. I heard voic so I came to investigate. . . . I was reading some statistics abo divorce in the paper the other day."

"I remember—remember quite distinctly," the minister re marked, "and it impressed me as a grave state of affairs. I rea the article with a heavy heart. In the states of Oregon and Wash ington, Philip, an investigation showed that during a six monti period, lately, the ratio was one divorce in every two marriages Statistics published by Mr. Carroll D. Wright of the Depar ment of Labor in Washington, show that in twenty years nearl one million persons in the United States have applied to th courts for divorce, and that more than six hundred and fifty thou sand of these have been granted!"

"But, Padre, you imply that divorce destroys marriage. I doesn't; it distinctly fosters it. A thousand divorces mean tw thousand marriages. Divorce re-sorts the couples, which I main tain, is a very good thing, when they are ill-assorted. Moreover it makes timid people who are afraid of marriage more willin to try it. And don't you think that just *because* divorce is pos sible, it acts as a preventive to itself?"

The clergyman eyed Philip in tolerant reproach, but before h could answer, Rosemary spoke.

"Harry and I have had one of the most perfect marriages o the world, but sometimes I think, Mr. Gould, it's because bot of us have been so desperately interested in making our home success."

"That's exactly what marriage should mean,—always!" Th clergyman turned to Philip: "There's your answer. 'To mak the home a success!'"

"But it doesn't do that! Marriage is slavery, nine times ou of ten,—it's a life sentence to unhappiness. How in the nam of all that's fair and just, are a man and woman to know whethe or not they are congenial? How are they to know whether or no they have the same taste in regard to clothes, books, food, musi flowers, friends, children? How are they to know whether the

are mates or mismates in their sex relationship? . . . It's a fearful gamble, for which you have to pay dearly if you lose."

"I'll be fair to you, Philip. You're right about marriage being somewhat of a leap in the dark. We do our best to help young men and women to become well acquainted with one another before they marry. That's the parents' duty; everyone's duty. That's all that can be done. Anything further would be unthinkable. Trial marriages are intolerable, un-Christian, impracticable. We should arrive exactly where we are to-day. Marriages frequently turn out unfortunately, and there are many instances when a heavy penalty is imposed. In such cases, I say, let husband and wife separate,—for only a time, maybe,—for life if necessary. But let them remarry? No. There should be a positive law forbidding remarriage under any circumstances. Such a place as Reno is a desecration of our national life. I refuse positively to marry anyone who has a living husband or wife, and every clergyman, no matter of what faith, should make that his Christian duty. The Roman Catholic Church stands firm upon that issue and——"

"Mr. Gould," Rosemary interrupted, "there's many a Roman Catholic marriage that's been dissolved by the Pope for good and sufficient reasons and the parties have remarried."

"That may be, but it should not be allowed. The Episcopal Church, I believe, at its next general convention, will adopt a canon making remarriage impossible, and all other Christian Churches will follow suit. Divorce and remarriage is the most pressing question before the nation to-day——"

"Padre," said Philip earnestly, "you can never take the right of people to remarry away from them,—not in *this* country. We are a democracy and our Constitution specifies 'liberty and the pursuit of happiness' for all. To force two unmarried people who did not like each other to marry would be certainly an outrageous injustice. But it is exactly the same thing to force people to stay married when they no longer have any desire to remain so, or to prevent them from remarrying someone else with whom they feel they would be better satisfied.

"The marriage vow is superfluous," he continued—he was thinking of his relations with Mrs. Grotenberg—"where two people

are congenial, whether or not their union has been blessed by th Church. If love remains—or let us say affection or simply friend ship,—neither man nor woman will want to desert the other any more than they would turn against an intimate or dear com panion. What good is it to rope people together who bitterl resent it? If the essential essence of true marriage is present they are anxious to treat each other fairly, without being roped."

"But suppose one wants to break loose and the other doesn't?" asked Rosemary. Her husband had joined the group and was now an interested listener. He stood beside his wife as she leaned against a porch pillar, one arm about her waist.

"That is no worse," declared Philip, "than when a man des perately loves a woman, begs her to marry him and is refused. We expect such a man to face his ill luck with fortitude and most certainly not to try to force the lady to marry him against her will. I did it; I know what renunciation means."

"And you would permit the wife to leave her husband, or the husband to leave his wife when either grew tired of the other or fancied someone else?"

"Most assuredly," Philip answered. "Just because husband and wife possessed this right to terminate the bond, it would tend to prolong it. Each would be infinitely more considerate of the other. Marriage is a cloak which permits all sorts of vulgarity and licentiousness to go on beneath its folds."

"If that is true," said the clergyman, "it is a grievous and a pitiable state of affairs. But unfortunate as it is, it has no bear ing upon the question of remarriage."

"Most certainly it has," rejoined Philip, "for a man may be more fortunate in his second choice."

"But again he leaps in the dark," said the minister.

Philip thought of Leila, and fell silent.

"I tell you, Phil," continued the other, "in the home lies the strength of the nation. Disrupt that, and it crumbles, and with the nation go civilization, progress, humanity. The time has come when a right public sentiment must be aroused, with a slogan, 'Maintain the Home.' The facts must be brought plainly before our people. They must be shown clearly what the situation

and what are its inevitable consequences. There should be a eat campaign of education in the matter. All Christian forces our land, and all patriotic forces, too, should unite to combat is evil. The clergy of all faiths must speak out clearly; all o love America must take this matter in hand. We ought to ke it clear that loyalty to the marriage tie and to the home is quired not only by the law of God, but by love for country, d that whoever, by his example, weakens the foundation of the me, sins against the very life of the state. We send our boys the battlefields to die in order that our nation shall be pre- ved; we can expect the same sacrifice from husbands and wives. u say that a law preventing remarriage would create great hard- ip, but I say it is right for us to ask that sacrifice, if it is for e sake of right, for the welfare of the country."

"Well, I think we should lose no time in regulating marriage vs by federal enactment," spoke up Harry. "If divorce is a cessary evil, it should be controlled. At present each state termines for itself what are and what are not good and suf- ent reasons for divorce. In South Carolina, divorce is impos- le on any grounds; in the state of Washington it may be anted for any cause deemed sufficient by the court; in Kentucky decree may be obtained if it can be shown that husband and fe have lived apart for five consecutive years. But the states not recognize the legality of one another's laws, so that often, t by crossing a boundary line, a lawful wife becomes a man's stress, while children are legitimate in one state and illegitimate another."

"We would do away with all that," reiterated Mr. Gould, y making remarriage impossible. We must not only meet this l by the authority of the law, but we must show the deep ral issue behind the law. We must make people see that the ching of God's Word is true in fact; that marriage is not a re contract but a real, living bond. Doctor Felix Adler," con- ued the clergyman, impressively shaking his finger at Philip, ho is a great ethical authority, states that marriage is per- nent in its very nature, and that when it has once been entered on 'a tie as strong as that of nature has been formed; so that husband cannot cut the wife adrift nor the wife cut the

husband adrift any more than the parent can cut the chi adrift.'"

Philip's laugh rang out.

"Padre, that sounds all very well, but in real life it does work out that way. My first wife not only cut me adrift, a her second husband, too, but her child as well!"

"And what about the children?" broke in Rosemary. "That the great stumbling block to divorce, it seems to me. Whe fathers and mothers agree to separate, what becomes of t children?"

"Well, suppose one or the other or both parents died?" ask Philip. "What then? Isn't it exactly the same situation? To orphaned, of course, is a regrettable thing, but nobody goes abo yelling that Death is a crying evil and should be stopped. W accept Death; we should accept divorce. . . . Besides, it doesn make any difference what becomes of the children. It's bett they should go with either father or mother than remain in house where there is bitter quarrelling. Let them become war of the State, or have the nearest relative take charge of them An unhappy household is a bad nursery. Marriage as a fact he summarized, "is nothing like marriage as an ideal. As actually exists, it is a pitiful imitation of what it is supposed t be, a miserable counterfeit. It glitters, it allures, it shines lik gold,—but it's no more than brass, raw-cut and ugly, cheap an tawdry, hard-edged and bitter-tasting,—a sorry substitute, tha gangrenes the minute it ceases to be new."

§ 4.

Gray, lifeless fog pressed against the windows of the chea and cheerless room in which Philip spent his first night upo his return to San Francisco. It was not yet six in the morning but sleep was no longer possible for him. He had had a restles night, waking fitfully, pursued relentlessly by horrible dream when snatches of sleep came to him. Thoughts about his littl girl harassed him. He wanted to see her, to assure himsel she was all right. What was life to mean to him, if he were t lose her? In his sleep he saw her drowning, her little white dres gleaming in the dark green waves, heard her calling to him; sh

as sick, her small face aflame with fever, and she cried piteously
or him to come to her, but the admonishing words of the old
adre forbade him.

The long night left him with a throbbing head, a dry, acrid
outh, and a body that felt as if beaten with flails. Painfully
e dressed himself, and went out into the wet, misty street. The
g was thick and drenching. He turned up his coat collar to
rotect his neck from the occasional drip of an awning; a falling
rop, now and then, struck the crown of his derby hat with a
ny "plump."

By seven o'clock he found himself in the vicinity of Twenty-
xth Street and San José Avenue. As he was passing a dusty,
tle stationery store, the old, decrepit proprietor was out in
ont, taking down the shutters. Morning papers were piled on a
ckety table in the entrance-way, their damp pages weighted down
a few small rocks; in the window lay a dim array of dusty,
eap toys.

Philip hesitated, then wedged his large bulk through a narrow
orway into the dark, close interior. He peered up at the dingy
elves and finally selected a small red cart with yellow wheels
d a long handle. He had the man wrap it up, and with the
ndle beneath his arm, went out into the street again.

There were no signs of life about his old home when he
ached it; the place looked untenanted, deserted. He sat down
on the steps of the shoe factory across the street and waited.
ie fog was lifting rapidly; pale watery sunshine commenced to
ck out uncertain shadows in the street. A Conboy child, blink-
g and shivering, appeared on its way to the delicatessen store.
is Braüser, an apron tied about his fat middle, was sweeping
e wooden sidewalk in front of his grocery.

Philip vaguely tried to think of what he should say to Leila
en they met. He had no definite speech ready; he only wanted
see Lucy. It was cold and damp where he sat; whatever
nshine and warmth there were filled the opposite side of the
eet; but though his head ached, and he felt chilled and hungry,
continued to keep his vigil. When the Conboy children trooped
und the corner on their way to school, he knew it was
proaching nine o'clock. Nothing had changed about his home;

there was not even a breath of smoke from the terra-cotta chimney-pipe over the kitchen.

Gus Braüser saw him where he sat and came over to him.

"Say, Mischter Baldvin,—ven you goin' to bay me vat you owe me—hein?"

"How much is it, Gus?"

"Vell, it's a hundred and tventy dollars already. . . . Ven you goin' to bay up?"

"I'll send you a check to-morrow," Philip promised, snatching at anything to still the man's offending challenge. "When did my—when did Mrs. Baldwin go away?"

"How should I know? I ain't seen her a long time; maybe it's a veek, maybe it's two veeks. I thought maybe you shump your bill."

Reckless with assurances of a prompt settlement, Philip drove him away. He turned his own steps downtown, but had arrived no further than the corner, when he remembered the bundle beneath his arm. He held it in his hands, twisting it about, speculating on what to do with it; then with some hesitancy he made his way back to the house. He listened for several moments, before he gently lifted the latch in the picket gate, he tiptoed up the weedy walk and laid the bundle carefully at the top of the three little steps, against the peeled and shabby door. Then with a cautious, guilty look up and down the deserted street, he hurried away.

§ 5.

Lucy was as good as her word. Within a week after she had become Mrs. Jasper John Fargo, Philip had a letter from her posted at Coronado. There was a check in it for forty dollars.

"Jasper is the nicest person in the world. He gives me everything I want, and he's much too good to me. I told him about you, and he was just as sweet as he could be. He said he'd write his agent in Los Angeles immediately and tell him to turn over to you all his insurance business. . . . I hope the enclosed will tide you over any present difficulties."

Philip examined the check, running the crisp paper through

his fingers, deliberating. Instinct prompted him to tear it up or to send it back; he did not like the thought of taking money from his sister.

"No use being a fool," he said to himself abruptly. He folded the check neatly and slipped it into an upper vest pocket.

In a day or two, he had a letter from Mr. Fargo's Los Angeles agent. If Mr. Baldwin would look after Mr. Fargo's insurance affairs in future, Mr. Fargo would be obliged; the agent enclosed a list of the policies and their dates of maturity; Mr. Fargo suggested taking out at once an additional ten thousand dollars on his new home in Beverly Hills, and he desired full coverage on a limousine as soon as the car should be delivered. Perhaps it might be advisable for Mr. Baldwin to run down to Los Angeles for a conference.

Philip stared at the long typewritten list of policies. It staggered him. He began to figure out his commissions. At the end of an hour an audible chuckle escaped him; he slapped his broad knee a resounding whack.

It was a warm, soft autumn day; the street outside was filled with hazy sunshine. From his dark corner at the rear of the real estate offices, he could see passers-by waving their hands at one another in jovial greeting. Elation flooded him. He drew out Lucy's check and smoothed it out with a pudgy forefinger, studying it briefly; then he scribled his name across the back, stepped to the cashier's window, and shoved it under the little iron grill.

"Can you cash this for me, Miss Smull?" he asked with an expansive smile of the girl inside. "Guess I can afford to celebrate to-day; just landed some big business; take care of me for the rest of my life. . . . Thought maybe I'd go 'round and have a good feed; got a bunch of friends that eat every day at *Jules'*. . . . Guess they'll be glad to see me."

He pocketed the money, fitted on his derby hat at a slight angle, and bustled out.

§ 6.

When he returned from his visit to Los Angeles, he went to see Beckie. He found her propped up in a deep armchair, a pillow at her back, enveloped voluminously in a man's dressing gown of silk brocade.

"Can't shake hands," she said sharply; "gout in my fingers. Sit down over there. . . . Why can't you support your wife and child properly?"

Her abruptness took his breath away; confidence and buoyancy deserted him. He listened to an avalanche of biting criticism with no attempt to stem it, until she was obliged to pause for breath.

"I came to find out where Leila and the baby went to," he faltered.

"Never you mind where they've gone. Your wife doesn't want to see you ever again——"

"But, Beckie——"

"You're a fine husband and father. Why should you worry yourself about what's become of them?"

"Now listen here, Beckie——"

"Do you know who's looking out for your wife and daughter? *I* am. But I want you to understand, Mr. Philip Baldwin, I'll not pay any of your debts,—not a nickel of 'em. You went through bankruptcy once; I daresay you will know how to get out of paying what you owe a second time. I gave you both a fine house, a fine piece of property that belonged to my grandfather, and you went and mortgaged it and then had the gall to ask me to pay . . ."

"Just a minute, Beckie. *Please!* . . . I'm all right now; I've got a lot of money coming in; I can take care of Leila and Lucy O. K. now. . . . You don't have to bother."

"How do you mean you 'got a lot of money coming in'?" She eyed him suspiciously.

"I landed some big insurance, and I'm not going to lose it, either. It'll net me three or four hundred a month."

Beckie settled her head on her shoulders and surveyed him critically.

"Well, it's about time, you did *something*. You've been about as much use as an old shoe."

"I've had this lined up for a long time," Philip said with an air. "If Leila had only waited . . . if she hadn't flown off the handle . . ."

"She says she won't ever live with you again."

"Then, I guess *you'll* have to take care of them." A chance glance at Beckie's face showed him he had scored; he pressed the point, vigorously.

"I can offer her a good home, now, and she can keep a servant. If she won't listen to that, you'll have to foot her bills yourself."

Beckie studied the knotty knuckles of her hands, where the gout had settled, and considered.

"You think you can take your family off my hands?"

"And the Jackson Street house, too," he declared confidently.

"Well, I'll talk to Leila," said Beckie, slowly, "but I can't answer for what she'll say . . ."

"Why now, Beckie, you can fix it up. You talk sense to Leila. As far as she's concerned she could go anywhere and live as she pleases, but she can't take my little girl away from me! I'll put up with her, and give her a decent home on account of Lucy. The child's as much mine as hers, and—and—I want her."

"You'll have to convince her you can provide for her decently."

"Oh, I can do that all right now."

"Well, I'll see what I can do."

CHAPTER VIII.

§ 1.

It was ten o'clock on a crisp November morning, two years later, when Philip made his large and cumbersome way between the railings of the real estate company from whom he still rented desk space, to his dim, dusty corner at the furthest end of the office. The metal sign, screwed to the back of the desk that faced the office, was corroded and barely readable now. One made out with difficulty the inscription: *P. Baldwin—Insurance—Notary Public.* A clerk or two greeted him familiarly as he passed their railed pens.

"Morning, Baldwin. . . . Howd'y, Baldy."

He answered them all genially, good-naturedly. He was smoking the end of a fine cigar he had bought that morning on his way downtown; he had had a fine breakfast; he felt in excellent spirits.

There was a neat stack of letters on his desk. Among them he was pleased to find one from his sister. There was no hope of her coming up to the ranch for the Christmas holidays as Rosemary had urged; she would be obliged to remain in Beverly Hills; her husband was no better, the chances were he would never be any better.

"Dodo's quite helpless, you know, Phil. He never wants me out of his sight,—won't let any of the servants touch him. I try to do what I can to keep him amused, but I confess it's a trifle wearing. I never go anywhere, now, nor see anybody. Dodo wants me for everything, and I don't dare to leave him even for a moment. Poor dear,—he can't even feed himself, and the doctors think it possible he may live in this terrible helplessness ten years longer."

The handwriting on another envelope was familiar, but Philip could not place it. Bursting the flap open with a fat forefinger

he was surprised to find Constance's signature at the bottom of the crackling single sheet. He had not heard from her for years.

"My dear Philip, Paul has come back. I think you should see him. He's with me here at the above address. Come soon and ring Simonds' bell.

"Always affectionately,

"Constance."

Philip scanned the few words over several times. . . . Paul? . . . Little Paul turned up again? . . . Constance had implied something amiss; what the deuce could it be? . . . Was Paul in trouble?

In the afternoon he boarded a Turk Street car and went uptown in the direction of the address Constance had supplied. He found a row of grimy, bay-windowed, gray houses all shouldering one another, as if throwing their combined weight against the hill that descended sharply upon them. 2912 was like the rest, except that in the shallow entrance-way at the top of the steep flight of wooden steps there was a brief row of bells above which, in discolored metal containers, appeared the names of the four tenants. Philip made out the rubbed penciled name of "Simonds" and pressed the celluloid button.

It was a shabby neighborhood, dilapidated and ugly. Across the street the windows of a vacant house were plastered with garish posters of a circus; a Chinese laundry, further on, gave forth a pungent odor of stale steam, soiled clothes and cheap cigarettes; the gutters were choked with rubbish; a brisk afternoon breeze filled the air with dust and street-sweepings. At the foot of the stairs on which Philip stood a closed motor car looked oddly out-of-place. The chauffeur, in spite of the wind-shield, was exposed to the flying dust, and bent his visored cap constantly to the quick gusts in a vain attempt to protect his eyes.

Constance opened the door. For a moment she blinked at Philip without recognition. He gained an impression of a shrunken Constance, older and grayer, the red moles standing out in vivid contrast to the whiteness of her face.

"It's you, is it, Philip?" She peered against the light. "Well! well,—come in; I'm glad you've come. Paul ain't a bit well. We can all have a talk. . . . Marjorie's here."

Philip filled the narrow, dark hallway with his bigness. The little flat smelled of dampness, of cooking, and unaired rooms. Constance opened a door directly at his elbow, and departed with a murmur of words. He stooped beneath a heavy tasselled fringe that hung across the door-top and stepped inside. It was a cramped, little parlor, musty and odorous, with saggy lace curtains at the windows and half-drawn shades shutting out the bleak glare of the sunlit street. He sat down gingerly upon a fragile straight-backed chair, twisting his derby hat about in his hands, and waited.

It came to him presently he was about to meet Marjorie. The prospect of the encounter disturbed him; as he considered it, his heart began to beat, he swallowed nervously, the palms of his hands grew moist. A vague memory came to him of a similar situation when he had waited for her thus, perturbed and with a quickened pulse. He saw again the be-draped front room of the Valencia Street flat, with the battle-axed easel supporting the crayon portrait of the two sisters. . . . That was——? How many years ago? He was too confused to count. . . . Marjorie,—of all persons! . . . He was going to see Marjorie again! . . . Little Margie!

He heard her coming and rose nervously. His heart thumped in his chest. Her step was familiar. Panic seized him; he wanted to hide, to dash into the street, but he remained frozen stiffly where he stood, and in another moment she was there, standing in the open doorway, framed in the tasselled curtaining. He was conscious of a red smiling mouth, dark eyes alive with light, a soft, shadowy plumed hat, and rich fur about throat and shoulders. It was Marjorie, all right,—but there was a difference,—*such* a difference! This woman was mature, groomed, beautiful.

"*We-ll,*—Philip. . . ."

She held out a small hand and came close, gazing up at him, laughing and interested.

"Marjorie . . . hello, Marjorie," he said huskily. He felt

the pressure of her hand in his moist palm, and the blood pulsed in his fingers.

"I can't see you!" she exclaimed. "It's so dark in here."

She glanced at the windows, then stepped into the embrasure, and jerked the shades higher, turning to inspect him as the light flooded the room.

"My gracious, but you've grown big! . . . Why, Phil,—you're enormous!" She laughed gaily.

He joined her, chuckling good-naturedly, though uncomfortably self-conscious.

"I *am* pretty fat."

"I like it," chirped Marjorie, "I think it becomes you. You look tremendously healthy."

"Oh, I'm never sick. . . . Let's get a look at *you*. . . . How many years has it been?"

"Don't let's count 'em," she said, laughing. "Down at Hollywood I tell them I'm twenty-five."

"Well, you look it; I wouldn't take you for a day older." She did look young, but there was an astonishing change in her from the little girl he remembered. A look of intelligence in her eyes, of understanding and sympathy was new to him. She was infinitely more attractive. There were dark half-moons beneath her eyes, but otherwise the years had made little perceptible difference. She had grown mature without appearing older. She had poise now, and confidence in her manner. Philip was impressed, also, with the elegance of her costume, the plumed hat, the rich fur scarf, the general effect of a beautifully dressed woman. He chuckled delightedly.

"I'm awfully glad to see you again, Margie . . . Lord—Lord!—think of all that's happened!"

"No—no; let's *not*. . . . Have I changed much?"

"Well, if you have, it's an improvement,—that's all I can say. You've become—you're a very lovely woman; I guess you know that."

"Oh, do you think so? . . . That's nice of you."

A warm flush darkened the olive cheeks. Philip, watching her, was deeply moved.

"My God,—Margie,——" he blurted out, and stopped. He could not go on; he did not know what he wanted to say. For a moment there was a silence between them, pregnant with old emotions. The woman brusquely ended it.

"Sit down and tell me about yourself. . . . Connie says you've married very well,—and you've got a little girl."

"Yes, my daughter's nearly seven. She's a lovely child, and a great joy. . . . We named her Lucy, after my sister,—but I remember, you and Lucy never hit it off very well."

"She's Mrs. J. J. Fargo now, isn't she? I thought she married your friend Lansing?"

"She did, but they didn't get on. They were divorced after awhile. He went down to Brazil, lives in São Paulo, and he's made a lot of money in the importing and exporting business. I hear from him once in awhile. He's got a couple of kids now,—a boy and a girl."

"Mrs. Fargo was at the studios one day about a year ago. I saw her there, but I had a green make-up on, and she never placed me. I wanted to recall myself to her, but the set was all ready and they were waiting for me. . . . They say Mr. Fargo's as rich as Rockefeller. . . . Isn't it fortunate you both married so well?"

"Mrs. Baldwin,—my—my wife inherited from her cousin only recently. We had a hard time scraping along for a number of years. You know my business failed; it was just after I married again."

Marjorie shuddered, hugging her fur close to her neck.

"Don't speak of hard times! I know all about 'em."

"What became of North?" Philip asked bluntly.

"I don't know; I've never inquired. I heard he was with Marcus Loew."

"And you've not married again?"

"No. I'm still Marjorie North, and I'll always be that, I guess. No more husbands for me." She laughed and laid the tips of her fingers on his arm. "I wasn't cut out to be a wife, I'm afraid. Anyhow, it would be bad business for me, now. I'm getting where I want to be,—but it's frightfully hard work. I made eight pictures last year, Phil, and nine the year before. They don't give me a week's rest between them. Sometimes

on't get three days. . . . I've got another year to run on my resent contract, and then Metro wants me. I've had a lot of ffers. Maybe I'll form my own company."

"I saw one of your pictures once. Paul and I saw it together. t was four or five years ago."

"Oh, I'm not doing thrillers any more. When the First ational releases *Life's Turmoil,* I want you to promise me ou'll go to see it. It's the best picture I ever made, and it ost over two hundred thousand dollars."

"I most certainly will. Do you like the business?"

"Oh, it's interesting, and I'm making money. You must come own and see my home in Los Angeles. Couldn't you pay me a little isit some time? Between pictures, you know; I'd write you hen. I'd love to talk over old times."

"I'd like to. I frequently go to Los Angeles to see a lient's agent."

"I have a lovely house. It was only completed last year; I ad such fun furnishing it."

Again there was a constrained pause. Both remembered the leasure and excitement they had shared in picking out the urniture for the little flat on California Street.

"Phil," Marjorie said impulsively, "I treated you rottenly. know that now. I was selfish and—and horrid. Try and for- ive me. I've been thinking all these years of how mean I was o you—and how I neglected my baby. . . . Have you seen Paul? ome, I'll show you."

She got up and moved abruptly toward the door with a eckoning gesture, and disappeared. He followed, feeling his ay through the dark hall, until a jog revealed a square of light urther along, flung against the floor and wainscoting of the allway from an open door.

Here was another small room, crowded by a wide walnut bed, ith a tall, paneled back, and massive foot-board, with carved urns urmounting the corners. Constance was sitting near its head in a ow rocker; Marjorie, in her rich fur and plumed hat, leaned ver the foot. Philip came in awkwardly, and edged in beside er.

There were the gaunt features of a man upon the pillow, a

sick man with close-set eyes, and great cup hollows beneath hi cheek-bones.

"Here's your father, Paul," said Constance brightly. "Remem ber your papa?"

The quick, shifting eyes found Philip's face briefly, the turned away. It was by that swift uncertain look the man recog nized his son. He bent closer. The scraggling light brown hai on chin and cheek gave an impression of masculine maturity; bu it was only a boy,—Paul, not yet eighteen.

"Well, Paul," Philip said with embarrassment, "how are you?" He felt acutely the lameness of his greeting.

"Not very strong, Philip," Constance answered, "but's he's much better than he was."

"How long's he been sick?"

Constance eyed the boy in the bed for a moment, and smiled dubiously.

"I guess we don't know that, do we, Paul? . . . He's been here with me since Saturday. But I'm sure he's stronger now than when he came; the doctor says so himself."

In the moment's ensuing silence Philip heard Marjorie draw a long breath.

"You're not in any pain, are you, Paul?" she asked gently. They had to wait for his reply.

"No."

Philip was startled by the deep man's note in the voice. . . Ah, it was too bad—too bad! . . . It was a shame. . . . Little old Paul! . . . Something would have to be done to put him on his feet. . . . He had evidently been in bad straits.

"Well,—we'll get you well again, Paul," Philip said. "You mustn't worry; we'll get you well again. . . . And—and I'll look after you," he added clumsily.

"Oh, we're all going to look after you," Marjorie said earnestly.

"Yes, yes," Constance chimed in, "we'll *all* look after you. We're going to take good care of you."

They continued to stare at him, at a loss what more to say. Philip kept nodding solemnly in confirmation of their statements, but Paul eased his head on the pillow, and studied the blank wall indifferently.

"Perhaps you'd like to take a little sleep, now,—would you, Paul?" Constance rose gently as she spoke and bent over him, pushing back from his forehead the thick, unruly, brown hair. "It never *would* stay down," she remarked. Paul did not move or change his fixed inspection of the wall.

"Well, I'll draw the shade," Constance said, straightening the top of the sheet neatly across his chest, "and you'll call if you want anything. . . . You'll remember your milk? . . . It's right here on the chair."

She busied herself arranging the tumbler, darkening the room, and then they all filed out, Constance coming last, softly closing the door behind her.

When they had arranged themselves on the flimsy, straight-backed chairs in the front room again, she gave them the boy's history.

"It was just a week ago to-day a man came to see me at the store, and asked me did I know a boy named Paul Baldwin. I said I did, of course, and then he went on and told me he was a Probation Officer of the Juvenile Court, and that Paul had gotten himself in trouble and that Judge Rumaski wanted to see me. I went 'round right away to the Judge's chambers in the Court House,—and say, let me tell you, Phil, that Judge is certainly a fine man. He wanted to know all about Paul, where he came from, who his parents were, and everything. I told him all I knew. Paul had said he had an aunt that worked at the *Emporium,* so that's how they come to send for me. The Judge went on to say that the boy had fallen in with bad company; he'd been going 'round with a regular ex-convict, a feller who's served two terms already in San Quentin. He was a 'porch-climber,' the Judge said. Well, this feller got Paul to help him; Judge never said how long it had been going on, but I guess it was for some time. The police were laying for him. They caught him one night, and Paul, trying to get away, ran straight into an officer's arms.

"Then they found out that Paul had tuberculosis. Out at the Detention Home they got him to tell who he was. The Judge was awfully kind; he said he was sure Paul wasn't to blame, that it was this feller who was making him do wrong,—stealing, you

know, and everything. He asked me about both of you, very particular, and he wanted to know if I couldn't get somebody to look after the boy, and be responsible for him. Of course, I told him I'd try. He said if I didn't, he'd have to send Paul to Ione until he was twenty-one, and he said he believed if he did that Paul would be certain to die. He wanted to give him a chance. . . . Well, you know, Phil, I went out to the Home to see Paul, and I tell you what, I felt pretty bad. I always felt mean about sending him away from me that time, and letting him go to boarding school. That wasn't any kind of a school, anyhow; he told me, the other day, they treated him something terrible; the boys bullied him and the teachers licked him. He wasn't the kind of boy that should have gone to a boarding-school, anyway. When I found him out at the Home, he says to me: 'Hello, Aunt Connie,' just like he used to, and I tell you what, I just sat down and cried, and I told him I'd fetch him out of there if I had to work my fingers to the bone. . . . So I went back to the Judge, and told him all about it, and I said I'd write to both of you right away, and couldn't I have him, and take him home with me, and the Judge said, 'Go ahead.' And I didn't lose no time either. . . .

"Now, what's to be done? What're we going to do? I can't keep him here much longer. A friend of mine who works down at the store lives here with me. That's the only bedroom we got, and we both been sleeping on the floor. I've got to go back to work Monday. . . . The doctor says Paul ought to go to a dry hot climate; says he'll die, sure as fate, if he stays here. I thought Margie maybe could take him down to Los Angeles with her, but she says she can't manage it. . . ."

"You see how it is, Phil," Marjorie interrupted to explain, "I'm working sometimes day and night. I have my lunch and often my dinner out at the studios. I don't get home until all hours. It isn't that I wouldn't *love* to have Paul, but I simply would never see him. I *couldn't* look after him. You haven't an idea how hard I have to work, and when we've finished a picture, I'm used up, and have to get every bit of rest I can. And even then I've got to be working up my costumes for the next picture."

"I see—I see," Philip repeated, rubbing his chin reflectively

"I'm in a bad fix, too. We've got a big house, but I'm afraid ny wife—well, Mrs. Baldwin's a bit peculiar, and I'm afraid he wouldn't like it. It's *her* house, you understand, and when he boy was with us before she didn't take a fancy to him. They didn't get along together very well. . . . And then there's he climate and the fog. . . ."

"Oh, yes, of course," Constance said, "it wouldn't do to keep im here in San Francisco. The doctor says particularly that e's got to go where it's warm."

"Look here, Connie," Marjorie said abruptly, "why can't *you* ake him? You can give up your position at the *Emporium*, and ake Paul south—down to Arizona, or some place where it's ot and dry. I'll contribute, and you will, too,—won't you, Philip?"

"Why, of course,—of course I will," he said.

But Constance shook her head dolefully.

"I don't see how I could manage that. After all these years own at the store. . . . And I've got this place on my hands, oo,—a friend and I took it together; we divide the rent."

"We'll take care of all that for you, Connie," said Philip. "It's eally up to you to take charge of Paul. You see how it is. Iargie can't take him and neither can I. . . . Who's going to o it, unless you do?"

Constance studied her bony fingers distressfully and continued o shake her head. "I couldn't; I couldn't," she repeated.

"Of *course* you can do it, Connie," Marjorie assured her. "There's othing in it for you down at the store. You go on working there ear after year, and what becomes of you then? They'll just lay ou off,—you know they will."

"They're very kind to me," murmured her sister, "and I've ot so many friends there. . . ."

"You can make just as many friends where the climate's right or Paul. You won't have to work any more. Even after Paul's ell again,—will she, Phil?"

"No, certainly not. We'll take care of you, Connie. I'll be lad to help."

"All the friends I got are in the store; girls I've known for years nd years."

"Nonsense," Marjorie said, sweeping away her objections. "What are they paying you, now?"

"Eighteen."

"Well,—now let's see—that's seventy-two a month; call it seventy-five. . . ."

In the end they wrung from her a mournful consent.

"It ain't that I won't be glad to do it for Paul," she said heavily. "I feel as if I never treated him right, sending him off to boarding-school that time. . . ."

"I've got more on my conscience than you have," Marjorie said. "I'm his mother, after all, and I haven't done a thing for him. When he was a baby, I passed him along to you. . . ."

"I don't think *I've* done what was right by the boy, either," Philip interrupted. "When he came to us after that school experience, it seems to me I might have done something with him. I had to lick him, but I guess that was the wrong way to handle him. . . . He was a pretty tough customer even then. I couldn't do a thing with him."

"He always had a weak stomach," murmured Constance.

"Well, I really think he's been an unusual kind of a child," Marjorie said, "ever since he was born. I remember him as a baby; he was hard to manage when he was six months old. . . . There *are* freak children, you know, every once in awhile,—children you can't account for,—that have queer streaks in them. I'm sure we never had anybody who was dishonest before in *our* family,—did we, Connie?" She laughed with the question.

"Nor in mine, either," Philip put in hastily. "We're straight American stock all the way back. . . . Paul certainly has been an odd boy. Parents aren't altogether responsible, I believe."

"Oh, indeed they're not," Marjorie agreed; "look at all the murderers and awful degenerates. You can't blame the way they turn out on their folks. . . . No,—you get a freak child now and then."

"He always had a weak stomach," reiterated Constance.

"You ought to see my brother's boys," Philip remarked. "They're three corkers,—you ought to see them. . . . You remember my brother, Harry, don't you, Margie?"

"Oh, yes;—let's see,—who'd he marry?"

"He married Rosemary,—Rosemary Church,—you remember?"

"Dimly," Marjorie said, gazing upward from under the brim of her hat. "She was at the dance that night at your house. Your brother was attentive to her then, wasn't he? . . . How've they made out?"

"I'm going to leave you two to gossip," said Constance, rising. "If you hear Paul, call me."

"Harry's got a fine paying orchard up there now," Philip stated, ignoring Constance's departure.

"Dear me,—Vacaville! . . . I shall never forget when I first heard the name. . . . How *is* the old ranch?"

"Oh, Ma sold that after Pa died. She's living with Harry now."

"We were doing a scene the other day in an orange grove," said Marjorie, her dark eyes thoughtful, "and it reminded me of the peach orchards up there. . . . I shall never forget the moonlight on those trees."

"That was the harvest moon," Philip reflected. "I remember how bright it was. I don't think I ever saw another moon just like that one."

"Perhaps we just *thought* it unusual."

"Perhaps; but it lasted so long. I remember one night it seemed to turn the old ranch into a kind of fairyland. It was just wonderful. I was uplifted,—kind of exalted; you had just said good-night to me. . . ."

Marjorie interrupted him with a quick laugh.

"Don't let's get sentimental, Phil,—not at our age! We're too old, and too—too disillusioned; I—I can't bear to talk about it. . . . Tell me what has happened to you? Your business failed, didn't it? Connie wrote me. How're you doing now?"

She turned a bright face of inquiry toward him, but he thought he caught a wet glitter in her eyes.

"You know, Margie," he said wistfully, his heart contracting, you'd only have to tie a big red ribbon 'round your hair to make yourself a little girl again. You're just the same. . . . Do you remember that night I came up to the camp to find you and we went after the water together, and I took you over to the old

well under the fig tree, and you leaned over the curbing and threw pebbles down into the water. . . .?"

"Please—*please,* Phil! I can't—let's not go back to those old times. . . . It doesn't do any good."

She jumped up as she spoke and began to move about energetically.

"I'll have to be going." She stepped to the window and peered through the sagging lace curtains.

"I've kept that poor man out there, gracious knows how long!" she remarked, with a conscience-stricken laugh.

"It's a nice looking car."

"You don't think it's mine?" She cast a swift glance toward him. "Heavens, no! It's a taxi I hired by the hour. I only got up from Los Angeles this morning. . . . I'm going back to-night. I'll drop you on the way to my hotel, if you like."

Paul was asleep, Constance said as she rejoined them on tiptoe from the dark hallway. She promised to make immediate arrangements to move the boy south; she'd consult the doctor, of course, and she'd let them know. The physician would tell her what would be a good place to take him to, and how soon he could be moved. She kissed her sister affectionately, and clung to Philip's hand, glancing from one face to the other.

"I wish you two . . ." she began.

"Oh, shut up, Connie,—for Heaven's sake!" Marjorie burst out with an impatient laugh. "You and Phil are enough to drive me out of my mind. . . . Come on, Phil. You'll write, won't you, Connie? Let me know how much to send, and don't let me off easy——"

§ 2.

"Connie has had a hard time of it," Marjorie said as the car carried the two swiftly over the city's hills. "She deserved something more of life. I'm glad Paul turned up for no other reason than to shake her loose from that old store. . . . Connie's always ready to settle down into a groove. She isn't a bit like she used to be, is she?"

"Stanley treated her rottenly," Philip observed.

"Oh, didn't he! It just makes me boil when I think of l the money he's made,—and Connie won't touch a cent of it. . . He had the nerve to ask her to divorce him about a year go. Told her he wanted to marry again,—some girl with a lot money."

"And Connie——?"

"Oh, Connie just did nothing about it, and then he sued *her* r desertion, and she didn't do anything about that, either. You now Connie. So he's free now, and I suppose he'll marry his eiress, and keep on rolling up his money."

"He certainly is a scoundrel!"

"Oh, there're men like that; I know lots of 'em. Men who imb up over the bodies of the friends who've boosted 'em; ey'd knife their wives, mothers, children, friends,—anybody, to ucceed."

"They'll get what's coming to them in this world or the next. . . You can't judge people till they're dead."

The car stopped in front of the house on Jackson Street, and hilip got out heavily, reluctantly.

"You've a lovely home," Marjorie said, leaning forward to look at it from the open door of the limousine. "It's quite and."

"It belonged to my wife's grandfather,—old Hamilton Vale. was given to her as a wedding present. . . . We only moved ack into it last winter."

"Your wife has money?" Marjorie still eyed the house.

"Well,—she came into something when her cousin died. She's ite independent of me, of course. But I have enough to get ong."

"Are you happy, Phil?"

In his even smile and steady look she had her answer. For moment their eyes met, and then Marjorie held out an impul- ve hand to touch his arm.

"Maybe we'd have done differently if we had it to do over ain."

"Yes, I think we would, Marjorie."

He took her hand and held it closely.

"I'm sorry," he added thickly.

They returned each other's look for a moment, and then the woman drew a long breath and leaned back against the stiff upholstery.

"Good-by," she said. She pressed his hand and turned away her head.

The door slammed; she waved to him with a flicker of her finger-tips, smiling back at him through the glass, as the motor moved smoothly away. Philip stood bare-headed, watching the car descend the hill. He caught a glimpse of her face again as it turned the corner.

§ 3.

"Oh—ho, Daddy! . . . Hello, my Daddy!"

A little girl swept down upon him and caught him around the knees.

"Well, my darling! . . . How's my pet?"

He bent down with difficulty, as the little girl twined her arms about his neck to kiss him eagerly. She was a vision of gold hair and blue eyes, a radiant fairy. There was the demurest of blue bonnets, trimmed with pink rosebuds, tied beneath her chin, a blue cape, pink-lined, around her shoulders, and a blue sash about the waist of her white lawn dress. Pink stockings rolled half-way down the calf, left bare her white, dimpled knees, and her little feet were shod in shining black leather pumps, set off with bright, cut-steel buckles.

Philip surveyed her with pleasure, smiling into her sparkling, dancing blue eyes, observing her glowing cheeks, her vivid red mouth, and glistening little white teeth.

"You're like a sunbeam, Lucy."

"Listen, Daddy,—c'n I go with you? C'n I, Daddy? . . . Please say 'yes.'" She clung tightly to his hand, hopping up and down beside him.

"Well, I guess so, darling. Daddy's home early to-day, and I should think we might celebrate. . . . Where would you like to go?"

"Excuse me, Mr. Baldwin." The nurse, waiting in the background, now came forward. "Miss Lucy's to pay a visit. . . ."

"But I don't *want* to go! I'd much rather stay with you, Daddy."

"It's a children's party, sir. It's going to be quite lovely. It's at four, sir, and Miss Lucy's late now. It's at Mrs. Franklin Erb's;—her little granddaughter, I believe, sir."

"But, Daddy,—why do I have to go? Couldn't I stay with you?"

"Could she . . .?" Philip eyed the nurse.

"Mrs. Baldwin's orders, sir, was that Miss Lucy was to be there," the woman replied primly, compressing her lips. "She was most particular about it."

"Oh,—very well, very well. I guess you'd better run along with Alice. It's a children's party, you know, and you're sure to have lots of fun."

The child pouted, digging her toe against the sidewalk.

"No—no, Lucy—don't do that," said the nurse, "you'll spoil your pretty shoes."

"Let me see——" Philip said slowly, with a significant air, "I think—I think—somewhere——" He fumbled in his pocket.

"Oh, what *is* it?" cried the little girl. "Something for me?"

Her father drew out a small white paper bag and shook it teasingly.

"Let me see—let me see——" cried the child.

She stretched up her hands eagerly, but her father held the bag beyond reach.

"It's hoarhound," he announced. "Do you know what hoarhound is? I knew a little girl once that used to like it better than anything else in the world."

"Oh, let's see—let's see!" begged the child excitedly.

He lowered the bag, opening the saw-toothed edge of its mouth for her inspection. Lucy peeped in, uttered an exclamation of pleasure and thrust in her hand.

"It's *candy!*" she proclaimed.

"Excuse me, Mr. Baldwin," the nurse said, with an arresting hand. "No candy for Miss Lucy. Mrs. Baldwin's orders. . . . She's very strict with me about that, sir. . . . Perhaps you can have one or two after the party, Lucy."

Philip pursed his lips in disappointment and eyed his little daughter, whose face was still raised to his in eager hope.

"It's too bad, my dear. You'd better take the candy, Alice," he said, handing the bag to the nurse. "Perhaps by and by . . ."

"But I want some *now*," cried Lucy, "just one little tiny piece,—please."

Alice stepped forward and laid firm hold of the child's hand.

"By and by, Lucy," she said soothingly. "Come along now; you're going to be late, and all the other little girls will be there, and they'll be sitting down to table with pretty paper caps on, and the ice cream and cake will be served, and everyone will be saying, 'Where's little Lucy Baldwin? Who's seen little Lucy Baldwin?' and nobody will know and perhaps they'll—telephone—your mama——"

The voice faded away, as the nurse drew her small charge after her down the hill. Philip, smiling affectionately, watched them disappear, hoping until they had turned the corner the child might glance back at him or wave her hand, but Lucy's attention evidently had been caught by the picture her nurse presented. He sighed lightly as the blue cape vanished, and with heavy steps mounted to his front door.

§ 4.

There were voices in the library as he swung back the massive, glass-paneled door. He could hear women's polite laughter and the tinkle of teaspoons against fragile china.

"It's to be a musicale," one woman was saying, "very informal, just a few people, you know, for dinner,—and then the music——"

"I'm still in mourning,"—this was Leila; "I haven't been going anywhere, you know. . . ."

"But this will be *so* informal——!"

Philip stole by the spacious open doorway, assiduously avoiding a glance within, hung up his hat in the coat closet, and ascended the stairs assisting his progress with a hand grasping the banisters.

The thought occurred to him, as he climbed, that Leila's year of mourning for Beckie had been spent mostly in the hands of

skin-specialists, hair-experts, and beauty doctors. He saw her only occasionally, but he knew well enough where she put in her time. Her hair was dyed back to its former straw-colored brilliance, while her neck and face had been pulled, rubbed and kneaded, but she was past fifty, and the wrinkles were ineffaceable despite the massaging and enamel. She had worked desperately hard for damned little result, he reflected contemptuously.

He reached the door of his room, and opened it somewhat brusquely. A startled, half-smothered scream and the sharply interrupted hum of a sewing machine greeted him. There were two women there, and the carpet was covered with scraps of cloth, threads and pins. In the centre stood a half-draped dressmaker's model.

The women stared at him, and he gazed from one to the other, embarrassed and mystified.

"Oh-h," he managed, "I didn't know. . . ."

"Mrs. Baldwin,——" began one of the women. "They were cleaning in the sewing-room to-day. Mrs. Baldwin told us . . ."

"That's all right,—that's all right," he hastened to say. "Don't disturb yourselves. . . . I'll sit some place else."

He withdrew, gently closing the door behind him. He considered a moment, rubbing his chin, then proceeded to the opposite end of the hall, where the nursery was. It was deserted here. Lucy's white, stencilled bed stood in the corner; there were a rack for her books, a clothes-pole for her small wraps, her dolls' house, a diminutive chest of drawers, a small play table and chair. The room was clean, cheerful, and in immaculate order.

By the window was a low rocking-chair, and into this Philip lowered himself and unfolded the evening newspaper he had brought upstairs with him. But he found in it nothing to interest him. The printed sheet slowly dropped to his knees, and he turned his eyes to the window. The garden was below, scrupulously trim and clean; sparrows were fighting by the edge of the rockaway, watched from afar by a stealthy cat who picked her way along the ivy-covered wall behind the greenhouse; the dying sunlight flung the shadows of tall clipped rose-bushes across the lawn.

His mind drifted to the afternoon's events, and as he sat gazing with unseeing eyes out upon the empty, quiet garden, happy mem-

ories returned to him. He remembered the moment he had first seen Marjorie, wringing out her little pile of wash under the willows; that was when she had called him 'Mr. Hercules'; and then there were the nights of the white moon, and the days in the city when he had got his first job, and used to haunt the flat over the grocery on Valencia Street. He lived again the wonderful hours of their brief honeymoon at Del Monte, and recalled their innocent gaiety, their delight in one another, their joyous freedom and perfect companionship. And then there had been meddling Mrs. Jones, and the time of their separation, and their chance meeting in front of the library, and the silent, thrilling walk up Post Street. He saw again the corner of the little candy store, when his earnest pleading had won her back to him, and he heard once more her broken, tearful confession:

"I've always loved you, Phil; . . . I've never stopped loving you."

Stinging pricks shot either eyeball. He pressed a fat palm to his eyes, and squeezed the pain still. It was gone,—it was over,—it would never come back again. Youth was dead—and love, too. There was no use thinking about such things. Marjorie had been right; he was too old, too disillusioned.

There was a running patter of feet in the hall, and Lucy flung wide the door; her eyes, as she caught sight of her father, widened with delight.

"Dad!—Why, Daddy!" She flew to him and climbed upon his knees, hugging and kissing him.

"You look so fun-ny in that little chair!"

"How was the party?"

The nurse came in and began to put away a few things. She disappeared and returned presently, capped and aproned.

"Come, Miss Lucy," she said, with patient resignation to the distraction occasioned by the man in the room, "it's time to get ready for supper."

"——and then the little girl began to cry and said she wanted to go home, and a lady came and asked her what the trouble was, but the little girl wouldn't tell, and then the lady took her away—don't, Alice, that hurts!—but everybody else was most well behaved——"

The story went on and on, Philip listening with encouraging nods and smiles, while Alice divested the child of bonnet and cape, and changed her dress.

Philip continued to linger, fascinated by his small daughter's confidences, but presently, the nurse announced it was time to go downstairs for supper.

"I like to have you come and call on me like this," Lucy said to her father, departing. "Will you do it again soon, Daddy?"

He promised, chuckling, heaved himself up from his low seat, and followed the two downstairs.

He paused a moment as he reached the lower hall, but there was a reassuring silence. He had not seen Leila for a day or two; he avoided meeting her as much as possible. They occasionally shared a somewhat silent meal together. But to-night as he glanced into the dining-room he noted with surprise there were no preparations for dinner. The tapestry cloth that covered the table during the day was still in place. The ebony clock above the mantelpiece pointed to the half hour; dinner usually was at seven.

He made his way to the pantry swing-door, shoved it back and peered within. Daniel, the colored butler, was there, tilted back against the sink in a chair, reading the remnants of the morning paper.

"No dinner to-night, Daniel?"

The man righted his chair, and rose respectfully to his feet.

"Mrs. Baldwin said she was dining out to-night. Told me to 'phone the garage to have the car 'round at quarter to eight."

"Oh-h," Philip said with a roving eye about the pantry. "Nothing for me, hey?"

"Missus never said nothin' about you, Mr. Baldwin," Daniel said, with a cocked eyebrow as if trying to remember. "It's the cook's night off," he added.

"Ah, I see."

As Philip seemed still to hesitate, the butler offered a suggestion.

"I could get you up a cold bite, Mr. Baldwin. . . . Wouldn't take me more 'an fifteen minutes."

Philip considered. "What you got?" he inquired.

"Well, there's some cold ham,—I know we got some cold ham,

and I guess there's a can of beans I could heat up for you,—and a bottle of beer. . . . How'd that do, sir?"

Philip twiddled his fingers against his lips as he deliberated, then fixed the butler with dubious study.

"Don't sound very filling. Guess I'll go downtown."

"Might be some lettuce in the ice chest," suggested Daniel. "I could fix you up a little salad, maybe. . . . Y'see,—Mrs. Baldwin never said nothing. . . ."

"I know, I know. Guess I'd better go downtown." His eye lit up as a comforting thought occurred to him.

"Perhaps there's a bite of cheese," persisted the man. . . . "I'll go see."

"No—no, never mind, Daniel,—don't you bother. I found a new little restaurant the other day where they give you a splendid *table d'hôte*,—excellent food, and serve you with the best shrimps I ever tasted."

"Very well, sir."

Philip was about to turn away, when he caught the sound of his daughter's voice in the kitchen beyond. He pushed through the swing-doors for a glimpse of her. She and nurse were having supper on the oil-clothed kitchen table. Lucy was deep in her bowl of milk and crackers, but before the nurse was a large smoking plate of broiled chops, green vegetables, and mashed potatoes. Philip sniffed the fragrant aroma that filled the kitchen as he stooped to kiss Lucy on the back of the neck.

"Good-bye, Daddy. . . . Will you come and call on me to-morrow?"

He made his way back to the still, orderly dining-room and brought out his hat and coat from the closet in the hall. As he thrust his arms into the overcoat, and struggled with humping shoulders to draw it on, a familiar noise assailed him. He listened a moment, buttoning the coat, pulling it into place.

It was the thump—thump—thump of Leila's cold heels on the floor above.

THE END

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